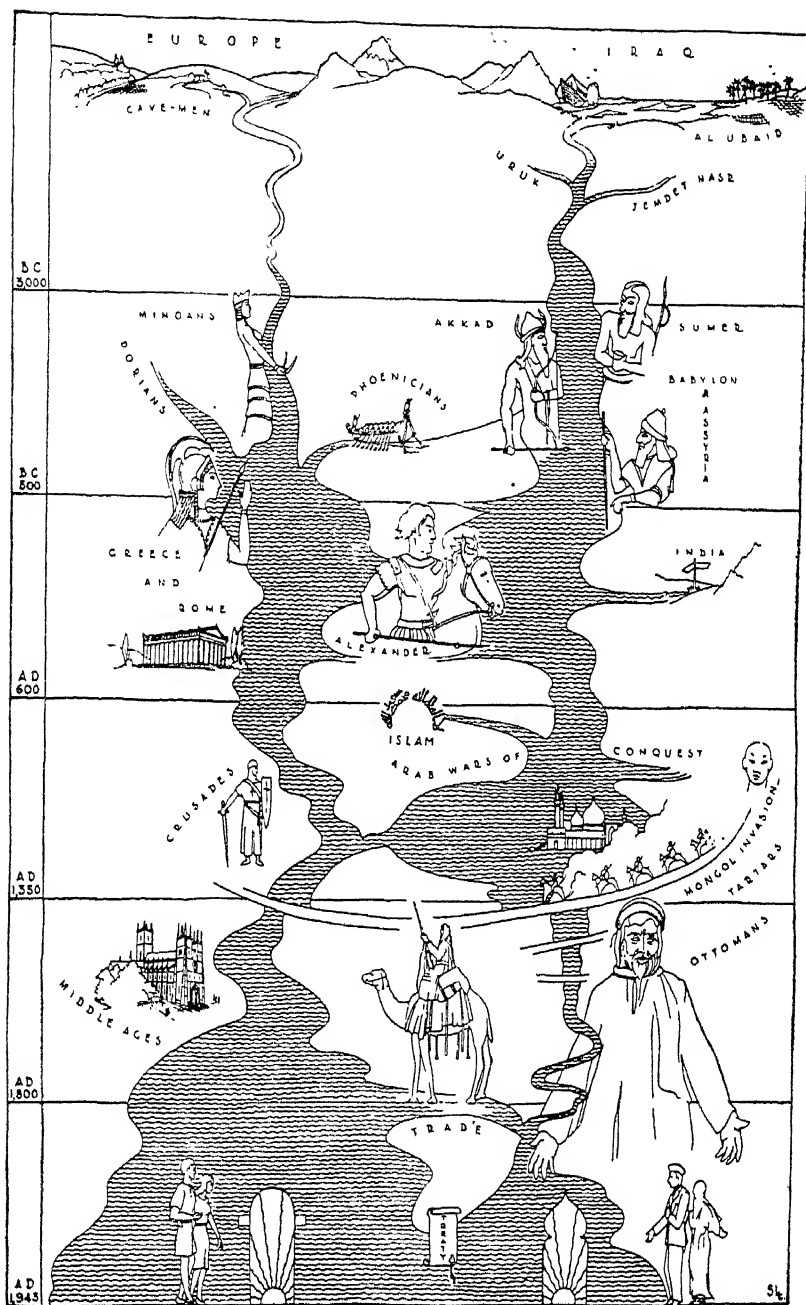


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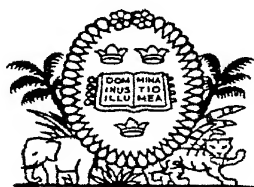
*A brief history of Iraq
from the earliest times
to the present day*

By

SETON LLOYD, F.S.A.

‘And when the walls shall sink, one, building the sign of his ambition with the ruin of another’s, shall use these same stones, remembering the former builder of walls.’

Soane, *The Sentimental Kurd*.



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PREFACE

UP to the present time, books dealing with the history of Iraq have been rigidly divided into various categories according to the period they deal with. Prehistoric, Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian times are covered by a large number of European or American scholars and archaeologists. Arab historians and a few specialized non-Arab orientalists deal with the Islamic period. But between the two there has always been a kind of no man's land corresponding to classical times in Europe, about which a good deal less is known and there is little accessible literature.

When I joined the Iraq Department of Antiquities in 1939, I found that for an ordinary layman to obtain a complete picture of the country's history he would need to acquire and read at least five separate books, several of which would be considerably out of date. The remedy for this seemed to be the compilation of a short consecutive account, combining the principal themes of all five. The necessity for such a book became even more obvious with the advent of British and other troops to Iraq and their immediate manifestation of interest in its antiquities. I greatly hope that this story, which I have endeavoured to make more readable than an average school history, will above all be acceptable to them.

It should perhaps be added that presumably no man by taking thought can in a night become a historian, any more than he can 'add a cubit to his stature'. For a professional excavator to achieve a coherent account in a few thousand words of the longest history of any single state in the world he must rely largely on citation as well as paraphrased abbreviation. Quotation from many standard works, in addition to the five books already mentioned, will thus, it is hoped, be understood and condoned.

In this connexion my acknowledgements are due particularly to Sir Leonard Woolley, the late Sir Denison Ross, Mr Bertram Thomas, Professor Hitti, Mr R. Coke and the late George Antonius, whose writings I have drawn upon extensively. I should also express my gratitude to personnel of the Iraq Directorate of Antiquities for much help and

advice, including facilities for making maps and diagrams and the use of photographs; to Lieutenant-Commander D. W. Lockard (United States Navy) and F/Lt J. Kirkman (R.A.F.), both archaeological colleagues in uniform, happening to be in Iraq, to Captain V. Holt, Oriental Secretary to the British Embassy and to two Arab friends, Sayeds Razuk Ghanam and Abdul Mesih Wazir, all of whom gave valuable assistance in preparing the manuscript. I have, finally, to thank Captain J. A. B. Palmer for undertaking to read the proofs in India in order that publication might not be unduly delayed, and to absolve him from all errors into which I may have fallen.

S. L.

Iraq Museum, Baghdad
Spring 1943

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The Publishers are grateful to the Iraq Museum, the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to reproduce the pictures acknowledged to them. Unhappily it was not possible to seek the permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale, from which the two pictures facing page 180 derive.

CHAPTER I

PRELUDE AMONG POTSDHERDS

It becomes more and more conveniently clear that the beginning of history—that is to say the beginning of the time when countries were ruled by kings whose names we know—was almost exactly three thousand years before Christ. The group-word used by historians for a succession of kings ruling a single state is 'dynasty'. In Iraq the beginning of the first dynasty of Sumerian kings also seems more and more likely to have corresponded in time to the first Pharaoh of the first Egyptian dynasty. Everything before this is more or less convincing speculation, arising out of the results of archaeological researches. In the case of Iraq, some of the most striking material which excavations have produced belongs to the dark period before written records begin, and any history would therefore be incomplete without an initial discussion of it.

The first conclusion to which an old-fashioned archaeologist reluctantly comes is that Mesopotamia is not the 'Garden of Eden', either Biblically or figuratively speaking. The ancestors of the first human beings who settled in Iraq in any numbers had, for hundreds if not thousands of years, been living in houses and known the use of comparatively advanced conveniences, such as pottery. This and other facts about them have only become clear, stage by stage, in the last few years. The stages have of necessity corresponded to archaeological discoveries, and it is therefore a great deal more easy to tell the story in terms of excavations than to attempt to patch up the incomplete narrative derived from their results.

One is told, I believe not entirely accurately, that before Layard began to excavate Nineveh in the middle of the last century all the Mesopotamian antiquities in the world could have been contained in a wooden box one yard square. However this may be, it is certain that until the beginning of the first World War almost nothing at all was known of the history of Mesopotamia before the Babylonian kings, and the Sumerians were a people whose existence was only suspected

from references in cuneiform inscriptions. By 1931 all this had changed, and a conference of archaeologists at Leiden in Holland were able to arrange in order and standardize the names of three main cultural periods in Iraq, which preceded the beginning of the Sumerian dynasties referred to in the inscriptions. These were to be called after the names of the sites where traces of them were first discovered—the earliest Al-Ubaid, the second Uruk and the third Jemdet Nasr.¹

The British Museum had discovered the mound called Al-Ubaid in the first months after the 1914-18 war, and while their representative, Dr Hall, was excavating a Sumerian temple there, he observed, in another part of the site, that the ground was littered with an unfamiliar pottery. It was dark green, over-baked, almost vitrified clay, ornamented with bold geometrical designs in black paint. Later Sir Leonard Woolley excavated this part of the mound, and discovered, directly above the virgin mud of the old river delta, the reed huts of the earliest settlers who had made and used this pottery. It was already suspected that in very early times the head of the Persian Gulf had taken a natural coastline passing through Hit and Samarra, many miles north of Baghdad, and that the whole of southern Iraq had been at that time submerged beneath its waters. There was now no doubt about it. Here were people who had appeared when the gulf was beginning to recede. The silt brought down by the two rivers was changing sea into marsh, and islands were beginning to appear upon which it was possible for them to live and plant corn. Where they came from, and whether these were the first ancestors of the Sumerians, whose rich graves and temples Woolley had by this time discovered nearby at Ur, was a problem which took several more years to solve satisfactorily. By about 1930, however, sufficient evidence had accumulated to trace their origin definitely to the highlands of Iran.

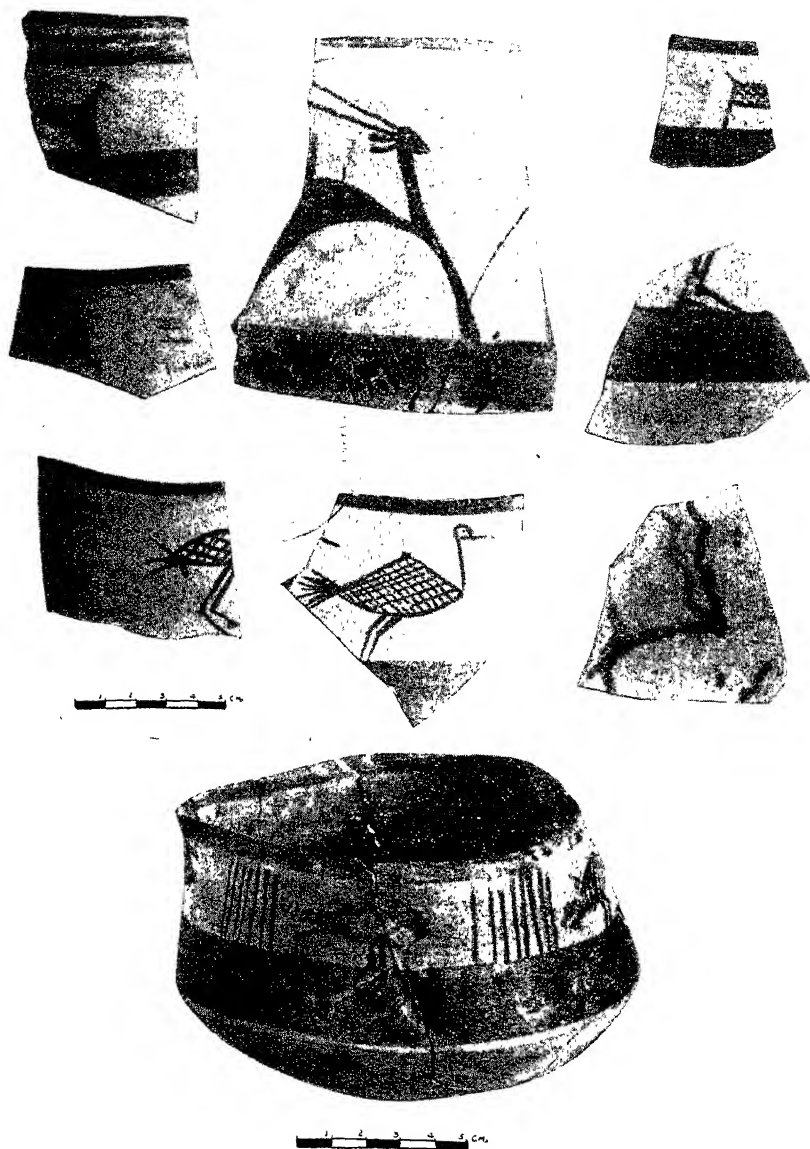
Under the geological circumstances mentioned above, it is not in the least surprising that the conditions of living suggested by the finds at Al-Ubaid corresponded very closely to those existing today in the marshes of southern Iraq, where the drying-out process is still incomplete. I have recently been in charge of Iraq Government excavations in another of these Al-Ubaid period settlements at a site nearer to Baghdad,

and was again struck with the similarity. Whereas in Sir Leonard Woolley's village the houses were still being built of reeds, daubed with mud, ours were at first of *pise* but later of good rectangular mud-bricks. The three materials are today used to about an equal extent, representing, as they probably did in antiquity, the proportion of dry land to water in any particular neighbourhood. At our site, called Uqair, the walls remained standing about one metre high, so that there was no difficulty in planning and imagining the appearance of this six-thousand-year-old village. We found a street, about wide enough to take a loaded pack-animal, with houses on both sides entered by doorways with wooden or reed doors pivoting on a hollow stone. The roofs were undoubtedly flat, and, fallen into the street, were terracotta rain-water spouts exactly like the tin ones used in Iraqi villages today. Inside there were four to six rooms, sensibly planned, sometimes with a staircase leading to the roof. One of them could usually be identified as an indoor kitchen, with the ordinary dome-shaped bread-oven which is still universally used in the East. One oven was completely filled with the discarded shells of fresh-water mussels, suggesting that this was a staple form of diet. Both here and at Al-Ubaid itself there were signs of a considerable preoccupation with boats and fishing. The boats, as we know from clay models, had a high prow and stern very much like the modern *bellum*. Fish were evidently netted, for we found ring-shaped net-weights and stone sinkers. They were also harpooned. Game was hunted with slings (for which we found quantities of specially made, baked clay pellets), or struck down with a stone-weighted club. In one house there were fragments of the antlers of three stags, of different ages, as well as the bones of some large domestic animals not yet identified. Similar bones, evidently from joints of meat, were sealed in storage-jars sunk beneath the floors. The soil was tilled with flint-headed hoes and the grain reaped with small sickles of very hard baked clay. Their shape looks very much as if an animal's jaw-bone was originally used for this purpose. Polished bone implements for eating were either pointed or chisel-ended, and had convenient bitumen handles. Although we found bone needles and spindle-whorls, as evidence of weaving, there is unfortunately little to suggest the dress or personal

appearance of these early people. The clay figurines we discovered usually had some religious significance, and were consequently naked. Some finds at Ur suggested tattoo-marks on the shoulders and arms. They wore tall, bitumen wigs. But most characteristic of all was the Al-Ubaid painted pottery, which we have already mentioned. From our houses at Uqair came fragments on which were painted the most spirited pictures of animals and birds. Although quite ornamentally conventionalized, and painted with a few deft sweeps of a brush, their character was unmistakable. A leaping antelope made a clear contrast to a trudging domestic beast; and the birds varied from ducks to the familiar crane. A short-legged spotted bird could, with a little imagination, be called a black partridge.

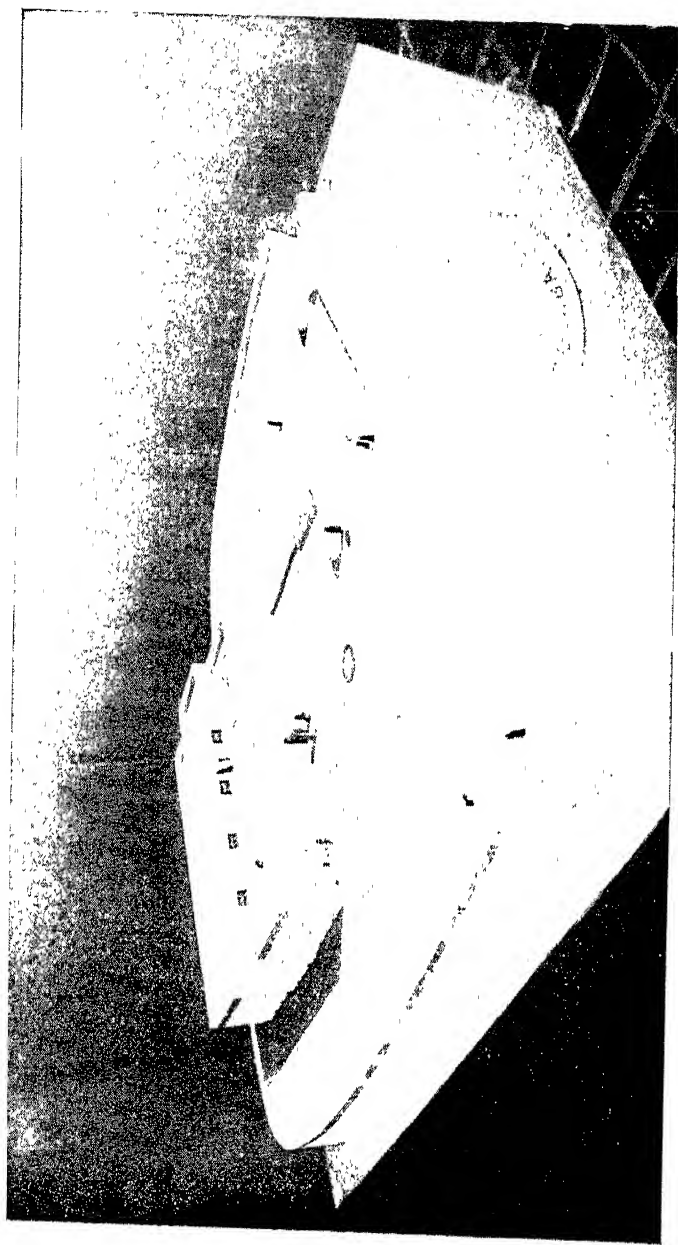
The next cultural phase was revealed at Warka, east of the Euphrates, where a German expedition had been excavating for some years. Warka is the site of almost the oldest Sumerian city, whose name was Uruk, and at Leiden this name was chosen for the second pre-dynastic period, in preference to the Biblical form of the name, Erech. At about the same time Sir Leonard Woolley had been digging a deep pit beneath the cemetery at Ur, in order to obtain the exact stratification of these early remains. He was therefore able to identify the finds which the Germans were making at Warka as dating from a period directly following that of Al-Ubaid. Of the evidence which led to this conclusion, the most important of all was again pottery. At a certain point in the accumulated layers of debris, through which the Ur sounding penetrated, the greenish Al-Ubaid pottery with its painted designs in black stopped abruptly. For several metres above not a single fragment of painted ware was to be found, and, what was even more interesting, it had given way to an entirely different and alien-looking pottery; red, black or grey in colour, and with a burnished, or sometimes even polished surface. This was precisely the character of the earthenware which the Germans were now finding at Warka.

Yet their finds were by no means limited to pottery. Many important cultural innovations went with the burnished pottery, and it was evident that the primitive marsh-dwellers of the Al-Ubaid period were now left far behind. Architecture,



Iraq Museum

Prehistoric pottery of the Al-Ubaid period found at Uqair. Note the fine decorative drawings of birds and animals.



A model of the 'Painted Temple' at Uqair, made in the laboratory of the
Iraq Museum

for instance, had made great strides. Here at Uruk there were monumental buildings on an impressive scale, palaces and temples, and even a shrine raised up on an artificial platform, the prototype of the *ziggurats* (staged towers) of the later Sumerian and Babylonian builders. Public buildings were now symmetrically and carefully planned. They were constructed of neat, rectangular mud-bricks and mortar, with alternating buttresses and recesses along the facades, and arched doorways. A kind of mosaic ornament had been devised to ornament the external wall-faces. This was composed of baked clay cones, the shape of a rifle-cartridge. Their ends were dipped into paint of various colours and they were then thrust into the still wet mud plaster, side by side, so that the colours formed a pattern.

One such temple, also of the Uruk period, was discovered during the Iraq Government excavations at Uqair in 1940. Perhaps it was because the Sumerians were originally mountain people that they preferred to raise up their shrines on artificial hills. In any case, this temple was built at the summit of a two-storey brick platform, semi-oval in shape and about five metres high, approached by three broad stairways. It consisted of a long central hall, with an altar at one end, four smaller rooms on either side, and stairs up to the roof. It was whitewashed outside, and inside covered with wall-paintings, which must be by far the oldest formal painted frescoes in the world. Almost all the rooms had the same scheme of decoration: a dado of plain, plum-coloured paint about a metre high; then about half a metre of elaborate geometric ornament in several colours; and above that a procession of human figures, and perhaps mythical animals, although these were difficult to recover owing to the fading of the painting as the plaster faces drew nearer to the surface of the mound. On each side of the altar were two guardian lions, one crouching and the other springing. They might equally well be called leopards, since they were painted in red outline on a white ground, and covered with black spots. The temple was built on a heavy layer of bitumen, and paved with white gypsum.

This and many of the buildings at Warka suggested real architectural accomplishment; so we may assume that the people of the Uruk period in Iraq were some of the world's

first serious builders and decorators. But this was not all. The relief-carving of figures on stone was one of their innovations, while their most important accomplishment of all was probably the introduction of the art of writing. It is now certain that writing began in Iraq, and was later adopted in Egypt. Its first and simplest beginning consisted of comprehensible marks made on a tablet of damp clay with the end of a reed. The necessity which brought it about is easy to understand. Supposing a servant had been entrusted by his master with three bags of corn to take to a neighbouring village, he would need on arrival some record of what he had originally been given ; and this is precisely what the earliest tablet in the Iraq Museum represents. There is the circular mark of a reed stuck three times into the clay, and beside it a bag of something, roughly drawn with a pointed twig. It is probable that at first writing was restricted in this way simply to numbers and simplified drawings representing common nouns, and that later the signs were adapted to abstract ideas. Another invention of the period added greatly to the possibilities of written messages, by establishing their authenticity. This was the cylinder-seal, which afterwards became an essential part of every upper-class Sumerian's personal equipment. Being as a rule illiterate, he could not sign his name, but he carried somewhere about his person a large cylindrical bead, whose surface was carved with a design in relief, so that when rolled across damp clay it would leave a frieze-like impression, easy to recognize and almost impossible to copy.

The numerous innovations of the Uruk period, and the abrupt change in the character of such a universal commodity as pottery, at once suggested that its beginning corresponded to the advent of a new group of foreign people into Iraq. On this assumption an investigation was made of their possible origin ; and it was soon satisfactorily demonstrated that they came from what is now central Turkey or Anatolia. Here pottery of the same quality and shapes as those of Warka was found, and other evidence of a migration. An intermediate stage in the passage of these 'Uruk' people from the mountains to the plain was most interestingly revealed in 1939 by yet another Iraq Government excavation at the foot of the Sinjar hills, north-west of Mosul.² Here was

a predynastic village where the grey type of burnished Uruk pottery was almost exclusively in use, whereas in the stratum immediately below painted Al-Ubaid pottery was the rule. There were signs too of the interest in architecture characteristic of the period, for the single private house which we were able to excavate had its doors built in ornamental recesses and a pair of decorative niches at either end of the central room. In one of the smaller rooms, we also discovered signs of yet another invention of the period, namely metal. Copper had appeared in very small quantities in the previous, Al-Ubaid period, but here was a copper javelin-head, with a tang to attach it to the wooden shaft, most professionally cast, probably in an open mould. What was perhaps equally interesting, since metal was still evidently an expensive luxury, we found in the same room exact copies of this implement, skilfully made in chipped flint. Nearby lay the easily recognizable horn of a water-buffalo, suggesting that in 3500 B.C. the *gamoos* was a new addition to Iraq's domestic animals.

Traces of the third, or Jemdet Nasr, phase of the predynastic period were first found in a small mound of that name near the great, ancient city of Kish, where Professor Langdon was excavating in the late nineteen-twenties. The Uruk people with their plain pottery had here been superseded or absorbed. Painted pottery was in use again, but like the Uruk wares it was still burnished. Red, yellow and black were used on a plum-coloured ground, and the designs were usually a kind of lattice-work, looking very much as if they had their origin in the decorative weaving of baskets. Generally speaking, in reviewing the Jemdet Nasr period, we find that many characteristics of the Uruk period have been adapted or improved upon. The art of sculpture on stone has above all matured, and there are now magnificent carvings both in relief and in the round. A few months before the outbreak of the present war the German excavators at Warka, digging in a stratum corresponding to the period, unearthed a life-size head carved in marble, which is now perhaps one of the most astonishing works of art in the Iraq Museum, not only because it is the oldest sculpture of its kind in the world, but on account of its extreme dignity. It was evidently part of a statue, of which only the face and hands were stone, for the head is cut off flat in the centre.

The remainder was very likely of wood, dressed with precious metals, and even woven materials. The eyes and eyebrows have deep hollows where the inlay is missing, but even this does not detract from the great beauty of the face. It was the Warka excavations also which produced the four-foot-tall carved stone vase of the Jemdet Nasr period, which is another early treasure of the Iraq Museum. It shows a procession of servants bringing offerings to a king, and, together with the cylinder-seals of this time, whose carving is now greatly improved, it throws much interesting light on the personal appearance of the early Sumerians. Here, almost for the first time, we are introduced personally to these strange, rather undersized gentlemen with their large, curved noses, and to women with hair down their backs, and curiously folded, fringed skirts, who are to become so familiar in the time of the dynastic kings.

Buildings have changed very little since the Uruk period, and clay-cone mosaics are still in use. Writing has improved, and the picture-signs, now much stylized, usually represent a syllable rather than a word. Tablets are usually divided into small rectangles, by lines drawn with a pointed stylus, and each rectangle contains the group of signs forming one word or title. Metal-casting has also advanced. Chisels and daggers are frequently found, while barbed fish-hooks of bronze are almost indistinguishable in design from those used today. The end of the fourth millennium is now approaching, and the stage is set for the beginning of the Sumerian dynasties. It is even doubtful whether some of the earlier kings whose names are recorded do not correspond in date to these Jemdet Nasr remains. But since we are to follow the sequence of archaeological discoveries rather than the story deduced from them, we must now retrace our steps to the earliest settlers, for British and American excavators in the Mosul area of northern Iraq had meanwhile surprisingly found traces of people with a highly developed culture, living among the undulating hills of that district, long before the arrival of the Al-Ubaid settlers in the south. Thus, year by year, the beginnings of human life in Mesopotamia seemed to be thrown further and further back, and the science of prehistoric pottery became more and more absorbing,

eclipsing now in interest the giant sculptures and historical inscriptions of a previous generation of excavators.

Two mounds north of Mosul produced the new and marvellously painted pottery of this pre-Al-Ubaid period which, surprisingly enough, was soon seen to rival in beauty of craftsmanship any later ceramics in the history of the country. Actually it was already known from the pre-1914 excavations of Baron von Oppenheim at Tell Halaf, near Nisibin on the Turko-Syrian frontier, and had long been known by the name of that site. But, owing to the confused stratification beneath von Oppenheim's Hittite palaces, where it was found, there had until now been no means of dating, even approximately, this polychrome 'Tell Halaf pottery', with its fine texture and variety of imaginative shapes. Now at Tepe Gawra, where the University of Pennsylvania had an expedition in 1931, and at Arpachiyah, where a British Museum expedition began to dig soon after, it could be accurately placed directly before the Al-Ubaid pottery. Excited reports were sent to European and American newspapers, and technical details to scientific journals; and, in spite of the fact that neither group of archaeologists had yet reached virgin soil in their excavations, and that the quality of the craftsmanship presupposed many centuries of previous development, the 'Tell Halaf' culture, with the curious, stone-built, beehive-shaped houses which went with it, and its elaborately planned temples, evidently the forerunners of the more substantial Uruk buildings in the south, took its turn to be considered as the earliest in Mesopotamia.

Naturally there also began to be much speculation as to where, if we proposed to seek the even earlier origins of this civilization, we should be best advised to look. A deep shaft which the British Museum had dug beneath the Ishtar temple at Nineveh had encountered some very primitive pottery, ornamented only with incised lines, beneath the Tell Halaf level, just before reaching virgin soil, but the equivalent of this could not be found anywhere in Iraq or the surrounding countries. The Tell Halaf pottery itself, however, by about 1935 had been found at widely separated points in Turkey and northern Syria, from the Tigris to the Mediterranean coast. It was therefore concluded that it had its origin in the wide belt of plain and foothills south of the Turkish

mountains, and the special interest of what one might call prehistorians was now concentrated on this area. A British expedition at Sakje Geuzu in Turkey, and Americans near Antioch in Syria, successively discovered a rather nondescript burnished pottery which they considered to be pre-Tell Halaf. But it was not until the winter of 1936 that Professor Garstang of Liverpool University found at Mersin in the Cilician plain, between the Taurus and Amanus mountains, a mound which put a new face on 'prehistory'. Here a whole new, unsuspected vista of incredibly antique civilization was opened up. Once and for all the Garden of Eden had been metaphorically removed from its traditional home in Mesopotamia, and, provisionally at least, located in the north-east corner of the Mediterranean.

It was an extraordinary archaeological phenomenon, this twenty-five-metre hummock of earth, beside a stream on the outskirts of Mersin. Professor Garstang had asked for my assistance in excavating it, and examining it with him before we began, noting that it was hardly two hundred metres in diameter at the base, and a great deal less at the top, we found it hard to believe that it would consist of more than the repeated rebuildings of a dull Hittite village. But fragments of painted pottery on the surface suggested otherwise, and we were not disappointed. A short distance from the top we came to the heavy, chambered, stone walls of a Hittite fortress, and beneath this the walls, also built in stone, of a succession of villages such as we had expected. But suddenly, about half-way between the summit of the mound and the stream, the buildings began to be mud-brick and there was a complete change in the pottery. Here amongst the *liben* houses was the familiar Al-Ubaid pottery of south Iraq, only slightly modified in design on account of the many hundreds of miles which separate the two sites. There were about four levels of Al-Ubaid material beneath, and then another change. Buildings began to appear, which had been destroyed in some great conflagration, and, as is so often the case under these circumstances, their contents were largely intact and merely covered by the debris fallen from the roof. There was much pottery, for the most part a hitherto unknown and purely local painted ware; but amongst this were unmistakable fragments of typical Tell Halaf painted vessels,

and other objects which might equally well have been found at Arpachiyah. Now we began to examine the buildings, and found to our great pleasure that we were excavating an important section of a tiny fortress city of the Tell Halaf period—perhaps 4500 B.C. We had a city gate, flanked by square towers, and a long section of fortress wall with ranges of slit-windows for defence. Against the wall inside was built a line of small houses for the garrison, each with its own courtyard, and, inside, two windows to each house. Inside the gate was an open square, and on one side of it a palace or public building whose rooms, beneath the fallen beams of the ceiling, were packed with painted pottery and other objects. But what was most significant of all was that here were remains of the Tell Halaf period separated from virgin soil by about ten metres of occupational debris, all representing a civilization earlier than anything known in Mesopotamia.

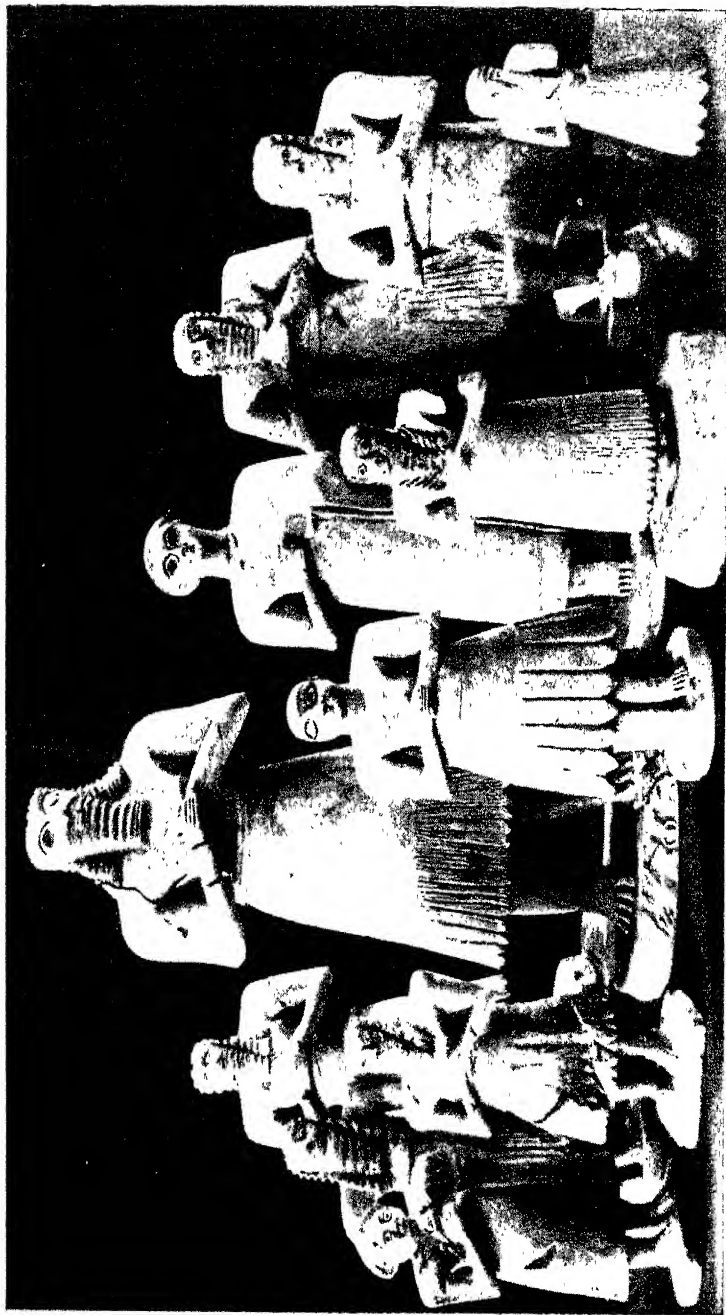
We were able to continue our excavations through mud-brick houses for about three metres beneath the fortress city, discovering a much more primitive painted pottery which could safely be identified as an earlier stage in the evolution of the Tell Halaf ware. Then, again everything changed. At a point still seven metres above virgin soil, all painted pottery and mud-brick ceased. Beneath there were indications of stone houses, a novel kind of plain, burnished or polished pottery and much flint. Here, unfortunately, having before us, and easily accessible, the material remains of the first known human beings ever to live in houses and make pottery, our excavating season came to an end, and, before another had begun, the present war intervened.

Before returning to England, we found time to make a preliminary sounding in the deepest strata of the Mersin mound and to get some idea of what is in store for a future season. The culture we found could be attributed to what is called the New Stone Age, since metal had not yet been discovered, and the houses were full of finely worked implements and weapons of flint and black volcanic glass. They were extremely well built, of stone boulders, with squared corner-blocks giving the appearance of quoins, and each house had several circular silos for grain. Their contents were largely restricted to the shining black, brown and grey pottery, mostly in simple bowl-shapes, and to the ubiquitous

flints and obsidian. These features seemed to persist almost to virgin soil, and were at least evidence of the existence of village communities here beside the sea in Cilicia, some hundreds of years before the earliest in Mesopotamia.

The story of Mersin may appear to be a digression from the history of Iraq. But the Mersin discovery of 1937-8 is the point from which prehistoric research will doubtless be taken up after the war, and it is extremely probable that the thread of descent will eventually be traced from these primitive folk in Cilicia to the earliest Iraqis who lived around Mosul in the fifth millennium B.C.

In any case, what we have already referred to as the 'incomplete narrative' of the arrival of civilization in Iraq, compiled from the results of all these researches, is somewhat as follows. A people, whose orderly life and advanced craftsmanship had been evolved in the hill-country of north Syria and south Turkey, spread into Iraq as far as the Tigris valley and what was then the head of the Persian Gulf. These were the Tell Halaf people, and they perhaps superseded much more primitive settlers, who had themselves only just arrived in the vicinity of Mosul. Next came a westward migration of highlanders from Iran, equally skilled in domestic crafts, though slightly less advanced in the ornamental painting of pottery. Judging from the intermediate stages through which pottery designs go, for instance at Tepe Gawra, the domination of the Tell Halaf people by the new arrivals took some time, for the pure Al-Ubaid pottery does not there emerge until some hundreds of years after the first appearance of its influence. Meanwhile the Persian Gulf was receding, and southern Iraq was becoming a habitable country; so that here the Al-Ubaid people were the first to settle. Both in the south and in the north they were finally displaced, or more likely absorbed, first by other mountaineers from Anatolia, the Uruk people, and secondly by a new element from their own home country, the Jamdet Nasr group. At the end of the Jemdet Nasr period, when written history begins, the inhabitants of Iraq are already known as Sumerians, though whether each of these early arrivals had in turn contributed something to the character of a composite people, now called by that name, or whether it already applied to one group of immigrants before its arrival in Iraq, has not yet been conclusively proved.



Oriental Institute, University of Chicago

Sumerian statues from Tell Asmar. Round a pair of cult-statues are grouped portrait-figures of private individuals from a Sumerian temple, dating from about 2800 B.C.



Oriental Institute, University of Chicago

Excavators at work uncovering the remains of a Sumerian temple

CHAPTER II

SUMER AND AKKAD

KING-LISTS, c. 3000-c. 1970 B.C.

A. THE KINGS BEFORE THE FLOOD (LARSA LIST), before 3000 B.C.

<i>Name</i>	<i>City</i>
A-lu-lim	Nunki
A-la(l)-gar	Nunki
En-me-en-lu-an-na	Bad-tabira
En-me-en-gal-an-na	Bad-tabira
Dumuzi the Shepherd, the god Tammuz	Bad-tabira
En-sib-zi-an-na	Larak
En-me-en-dur-an-na	Sippar
—du-du	Shuruppak
8 KINGS.	5 CITIES.
	241,200 YEARS.

B. THE KINGS AFTER THE FLOOD (LARSA LIST), 3000-2500 B.C.

The First Dynasty of KISH French excavations

1. Ga-ur	9. Ka-ga-gi-ib	16. Me-lam-kish
2. Gul-la-Nidaba-an-na	10. A-tab	17. Bar-rak-nun-na
3. _____	11. A-tab-ba	18. Mes-za-...
4. _____	12. Ar-pi-um	19. Ti-iz-gar
5. Ba-...	13. Etana the Shepherd, hero of an early myth	20. Il-ku-u
6. _____	14. Ba-li-ih	21. Il-ta-sa-du-um
7. Ga-li-bu-um	15. En-me-nun-na	22. En-me-en-bara-gi-si
8. Ka-lu-mu-mu		23. Ag-ga
23 KINGS.	24,510 YEARS	3 MONTHS 3½ DAYS.

The First Dynasty of ERECH German excavations at Warka

1. Mes-ki-ag-ga-se-ir (Son of the Sun-god)	3. (The God) Dumuzi the Fisherman	8. Labasher
2. En-mer-kar	5. Gilgamesh, Lord of Kullab , hero of the famous epic	9. En-nun-ad-an-na
3. (The God) Lugal-banda the Shepherd	6. Ur-ningal	10. ... -he-de
	7. Utul-kalamma	11. Me-lam-an-na
		12. Lugal-ki-aga
	12 KINGS.	2,310 YEARS.

The First Dynasty of UR Excavations by Sir Leonard Woolley

1. Mes-an-ni-pad-da	2. Mes-ki-ag-nannar
1A. A-an-ni-pad-da, built a temple at Al-Ubaid	3. Elulu
	4. Balulu
4 KINGS (SHOULD BE 5).	177 YEARS.

The Dynasty of AWAN

3 KINGS. 356 YEARS.

TWIN RIVERS

The Second Dynasty of KISH

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. _____ | 4. Ka-al-bu . . . | 7. I-bi-ni |
| 2. Da-da-sig | 5. Ku-e | 8. Lugal-mu |
| 3. Ma-ma-gal-la | 6. . . . nun-na | |

8 KINGS. 3,195 YEARS.

The Dynasty of HAMASI

1. Hadanish

1 KING. 360 YEARS.

The Second Dynasty of ERECH

1. En-uk-du-an-na

TOTAL LENGTH OF DYNASTY, 480 YEARS.

The Second Dynasty of UR

4 KINGS. 108 YEARS.

The Dynasty of ADAB

Banks' excavations at Bismaya

1. Lugal-an-ni-mu-un-du

1 KING. 90 YEARS.

The Dynasty of MARI

Louvre excavations at Tell Hariri

- | | | |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. An-pu | 3. . . . lugal | 5. . . . bi-im |
| 2. . . . zi | 4. . . . -lugal-gal | 6. _____ |

6 KINGS. 136 YEARS.

The Third Dynasty of KISH

1. Ku-bau, a queen

100 YEARS.

*The Dynasty of
AKSHAK*American excavations
at Khafaje

1. Unzi
2. Undalulu
3. Urur
4. Puzur-sahan
5. Ishu-il
6. Gimil-sin

*Governors of
LAGASH*French excavations at
Telloh

1. **Ur-nina** (2600 B.C.)
2. Akurgal
3. **Eannatum**, 'Stela
of the Vultures'
4. Enannatum I
5. Entemena, first dug
the Shatt-al-Hai
6. Enannatum II
7. Enetarzi
8. Enlitarri
9. Lugal-anda
10. **Urukagina**, law
reforms

*The Dynasty of
AGADE*

1. Sargon, the first great conqueror
2. Rimush
3. Manishtusu
4. Naram-sin, extended Sargon's conquests
5. Shar-gali-shari 'Who was king, who was not king?'

*Governors of
LAGASH*

Louvre excavations at Telloh

1. Ur-bau
2. Nam-makhni
3. Ur-gar
4. Dar-azzag
5. Lu-bau
6. Lu-gula
7. Gudea, great statesman and organizer
8. Ur-ningirsu
9. Ur-lama

*The Fourth Dynasty
of KISH*

1. Puzur-sin
2. Ur-ilbaba
3. Zimudar
4. Usi-watar
5. Ishtar-muti
6. Ishme-shamash
7. Nannia

*The Dynasty of
GUTIUM*

1. Imta
2. Inkishu
3. Nikillagab
4. Shulme
5. Elulumesh
6. Inimabakesh
7. Igeshaush
8. Iarlagab
9. Ibate
10. Iarlagash
11. Kurum
12. ———
13. ———
14. Irarum
15. Ibranumi
16. Hablum
17. Puzur-sin
18. Iarlaganda
19. ———
20. Tirigan, overthrown by Utu-khegal

*The Third Dynasty
of ERECH*

1. Lugal-zaggisi, originally patesi of Umma

*The Fourth Dynasty
of ERECH*

1. Ur-nigin
2. Ur-gigir
3. Kudda
4. Puzur-ili
5. Ur-babbar

*The Fifth Dynasty of
EREC*

1. Utu-khegal, liberator of Sumer from the Guti

*The Third Dynasty of
UR*

2210 - 2100 B.C.

1. Ur-nammu (Ur-engal), builder and reformer
2. Dungi (Shulgi)
3. Bur-sin
4. Gimil-sin
5. Ibi-sin, decline of Sumerian empire

*The Dynasty of
ISIN*

2100 -

1. Ishbi-irra
2. Gimil-ilishu
3. Idin-dagan
4. Ishme-dagan
5. Libit-ishtar
6. Ur-inurta
7. Bur-sin
8. Libit-enlil
9. Irra-mitti
10. Enlil-bani
11. Zambia
12. Iter-pisha
13. Ur-dukuga
14. Sin-magir
15. Damiq-bilishu

*The Dynasty of
LARSA*

B.C.

1. Naplanum
2. Emisu
3. Samum
4. Zabaia
5. Gungunum
6. Abi-sare
7. Sumu-ilu
8. Nur-adad
9. Sin-idinnum
10. Sin-eribam
11. Sin-iqisham
12. Silli-adad

*The Elamite Kings of
LARSA*

1. Warad-sin, son of Kudur-mabug
2. Rim-sin

THE history of Iraq, up to this point, is based entirely on the discoveries made by archaeologists and their consequent deductions. But from the last centuries of the fourth millennium onward there is a new source of information to draw upon, namely the evidence of written records. And it has to be remembered that until the deliberate excavation of Sumerian mounds began, about forty years ago, these written records were the only material to which a historian could turn, if he wished to interest himself in the ancient Sumerians. The material itself is bafflingly confused and inconsistent, as will be seen later, and it is therefore not surprising that up to the end of the nineteenth century Sumerian history had scarcely begun to emerge from the realm of legend.

It is not, of course, the early Sumerian scribes' own chronicles of contemporary events which have survived, but much later attempts to introduce some sort of order into the tangle of fragmentary legends, date-formulas, and prescriptions for taking omens, which had been handed down partly by word of mouth and partly in multiple recopyings in Babylonian cuneiform writing of Sumerian inscriptions. It was in approximately 2000 B.C. that the first serious attempt was made in Sumer to record the glories of the past, its political history and religious traditions. These writings themselves again have perished, but excerpts from them were embodied in Babylonian and Assyrian chronicles many hundreds of years later, some of which have survived. One of the latest of these historical records was the work of a Babylonian scribe called Berossus, who lived in the time of Alexander the Great, and he amongst others has left us a schematic list of the names of kings of Sumer and Akkad.

One fact that all the chroniclers, including Berossus, seem fairly agreed upon is that the first really important landmark in history was a great flood. The king-lists are generally divided into two parts, and the first part ends with some statement to the effect that 'then came the Flood, and after the Flood kingship again descended from on high'. In the names which occur before the flood there is an obvious confusion between kings, mythical heros and straightforward gods. Furthermore, although the names of several famous Mesopotamian cities such as Sippar (Tell Abu Habba) and Shuruppak (Farah) are mentioned as the cities in which they

ruled, no contemporary document has ever been found during recent excavations in the ruins of those cities which would link any one of the names in the list with the consecration, for instance, of a building or a statue, and so establish them as real persons. One name, Dumuzi, called 'the shepherd', is undoubtedly the god of vegetation—Tammuz in the Bible and Adonis in classical times.

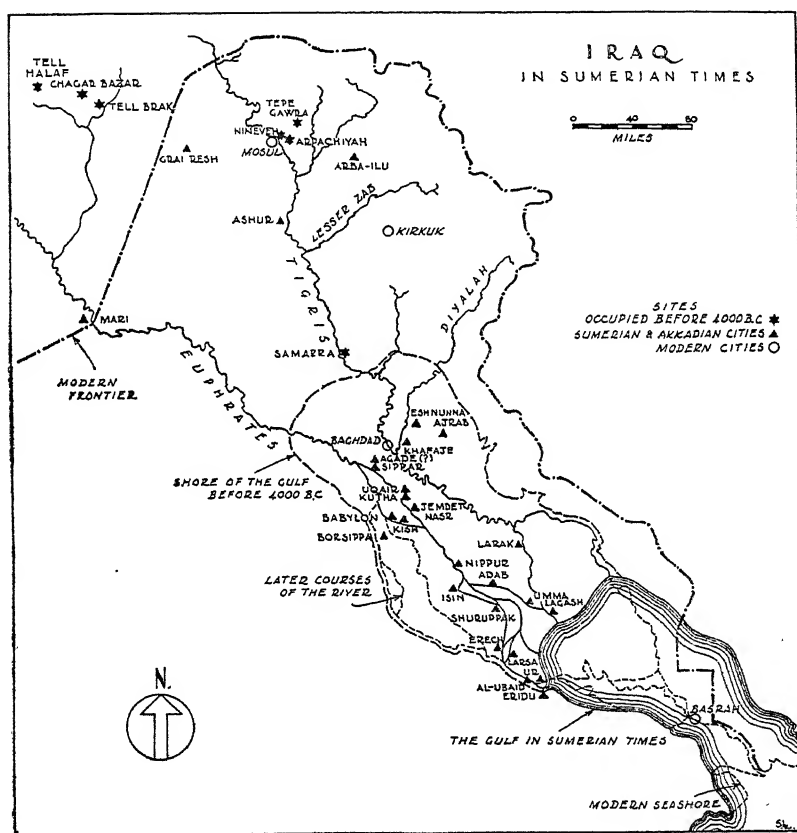
There is little reason, then, to doubt the authenticity of the historical event which afterwards came to be referred to as *the Flood*, and which was recorded in Hebrew as well as Sumerian tradition.³ Lower Iraq is a country where floods are a most common occurrence. Excavations at four of its ancient cities, Ur, Warka, Kish and Farah, have all produced evidence of a flood consisting of heavy deposits of clean clay, with evidence of human occupation both above and beneath. But these were proved by the stratification to belong to widely different periods. One has merely to suppose, therefore, that one of these was the Flood whose story has been told by mothers to their children all over the world for five thousand years. It converted all historical events before it into a confused mythology, and was distinguished by abnormal loss of life and destruction of property, or by some other contemporary political event of importance which gave it special significance. In any case it is responsible for the first coherent story in Sumerian literature, the discovery of which in the middle of the last century, largely confirming as it did the Biblical version of the same episode, created a profound sensation in Europe.

It was in 1850 that Sir Henry Layard, excavating in the ruins of Nineveh, discovered in the palace of the Assyrian king Sennacherib two chambers whose floors were covered a foot deep in inscribed clay tablets. Three years later, in another palace built by King Ashur-bani-pal, his assistant Rassam found another equally large collection. There were 25,073 in all, and they represented two almost complete royal libraries. The tablets themselves were at first thought to be fragments of decorated pottery, and the earliest consignments were shipped down to Basrah for transportation to England, in open baskets. The majority of them did safely reach the British Museum, but it was not until fifteen years later that George Smith, who was then Assistant Keeper of Oriental

Antiquities, made his great discovery among them. Part of his duties was the sorting and classification of the Nineveh collection, and he himself tells how, 'commencing a steady search among these fragments, I soon found half a curious tablet which had evidently originally contained six columns My eye caught the statement that the ship rested on the mountains of Nizir, followed by the account of the sending forth of the dove and its finding no resting-place and returning. I saw at once that I had here discovered a portion at least of the Chaldean account of the Deluge'.⁴ This created a great sensation in London, and the *Daily Telegraph* offered to contribute £1000 if Smith would travel to Nineveh and search for the fragments of the tablet which would complete the story. He did so, and in the end was able to recover 'the greater portion of the seventeen lines of inscription belonging to the first column of the Chaldean account of the Deluge, and fitting into the only place where there was a serious blank in the story'.

The account of the flood which emerged from all this was every bit as dramatic as the Biblical version. It concerned a patriarch called Utu-nipishtim, whose home was at Shuruppak on the Euphrates. Like Noah, he was approached by the god Ea, who told him of the impending doom of the earth and commanded him to build a boat, giving some details about its size and construction. This done, he complied with Ea's further wish that he should load it with 'all that he possessed and all the seed of life'. Utu-nipishtim continues the story: 'I made to go up into the ship all my family and kinsfolk, the cattle of the field, the beasts of the field, all handicraftsmen, I made them go up into it.' As the appointed time of the deluge drew near, he watched the aspect of the approaching storm. 'Terror possessed me to look upon it. I went into the ship and shut my door. To the pilot of the ship [apparently an angel] I committed the great house, together with the contents thereof.' Utu-nipishtim then mentions the havoc which was wrought on the earth as the cyclone mounted. 'The water attacked the people like a battle. Brother saw not brother. Men could not be recognized from heaven. Even the gods were terrified at the cyclone. They shrank back and went up into the heaven of Anu. The gods crouched like a dog and cowered by the

wall. The goddess Ishtar cried out like a woman in travail. The lady of the gods lamented with a sweet voice.' For six days the wind and the storm raged and the cyclone overwhelmed the land. 'When the seventh day came the cyclone ceased, the storm and the battle which had fought like an



army.' At the same time the ship 'grounded on the mountain of Nizir', and after 'opening the air hole' Utu-nipishtim began the same sort of investigation as Noah made. 'I brought out a dove and let her go free. The dove flew away and then came back, because she had no place to alight on she came back. I brought out a swallow and let her go free, but because she had no place to alight on she came back. I brought out a raven and let her go free; the raven flew away, she saw the sinking waters. She ate. She waded and

splashed, but came not back.' Again like Noah he now emerged from his ship and sacrificed to the gods and 'the gods gathered together like flies over him that sacrificed'. The goddess Ishtar offered up her priceless jewels in thanksgiving, but the god Enlil, whose anger had apparently caused the whole trouble, was at first displeased that any life should have survived. He was finally persuaded by one of his colleagues to show mercy to the ship's passengers, and Utu-nipishtim and his wife were deified.

When the land had once more dried up, and kingship had returned from on high, we are told that in the beginning the kingship was in Kish. In the king-lists, the first king whose name appears after the flood is accordingly the founder of the First Dynasty of Kish. There then follow the names of about seventy kings, divided into fourteen dynasties, and the sum total of the years allotted to their reigns is about thirty thousand years. Now apart from the impossible longevity attributed to individual kings, one of whom is listed as reigning 1500 years, we now know from archaeological evidence that the whole succession of dynasties must be fitted into a very much shorter space of time. We know, for instance, that their end must have coincided with the Akkadian conquest of Sumer, which is dated at the earliest to 2800 B.C. We also know that if we accept the evidence of the clay deposits found at both Warka and Farah, and fix the flood of the chronicles at the end of the Jemdet Nasr period, the whole scheme of early Sumerian dynasties must be compressed into a period of from two to five hundred years. We have therefore to resign ourselves, until any further explanation is offered, to accepting the years of the kings as schematic figures dictated by some astronomical formula.

Unfortunately it is not only in the matter of lengths of reigns that the scribes prove unreliable. When they are dealing with times not too far removed from their own and could consult contemporary records, their statements can in some degree be accepted, but even here there is a new difficulty, for in some cases dynasties which are listed as consecutive are in actual fact known to have been contemporary. It appears at first that the kings are lords of the whole country, but archaeology has revealed that some of the cities, whose names are mentioned as the homes of the various dynasties,

never actually extended their hegemony over all the others. Finally, like those before the flood, the earlier post-diluvian dynasties include names like Etana, which are palpably those of gods, and had in fact long been accepted as such by kings who appear as their predecessors. Nevertheless it is worth glancing through the list, if only to pick out such names as link up with information from other sources.

In the First Dynasty of Kish there is only one name of this sort, Etana, described as 'The shepherd who was conveyed to heaven'. He was the hero of one of the very earliest Sumerian myths, which describes how he persuaded an eagle to carry him to heaven, in search of a magical plant to assist his wife in labour. There is an amusing description of their ascent, during which the eagle sagely points out to his passenger the extreme smallness of the earth, seen from so far above. But Etana is apparently so disconcerted by the appearance of Heaven's Gate that he falls headlong to the earth with his mission unfulfilled.

The First Dynasty of Erech (Uruk, Warka), in addition to the gods Lugabanda and Dumuzi, also contains the name of Gilgamesh, 'Lord of Kullab'. Gilgamesh, who was also king of Erech, is one of the great mythical figures of Sumerian literature. His prodigious strength and astonishing adventures are described in a long epic poem, which by great good luck has been preserved almost intact. It was, some years ago, admirably rendered into English blank verse by the late Dr R. Campbell-Thompson,⁵ but even in literal translation makes fascinating reading. Gilgamesh is so often represented in the carving of Sumerian cylinder-seals and other sculptured objects that one has long ago become familiar with his appearance. Sometimes he is killing a lion or several lions, but almost always he is accompanied by his friend and rival, the beast-man Enkidu, with whose story the epic begins.

Gilgamesh himself is described as 'two-thirds god and one-third man'. When Enkidu appeared, he was ruling over the city of Erech, where he had built a great city wall and the famous temple, E-anna, whose ruins have recently been excavated by the Germans. Gilgamesh received news of Enkidu, roaming wild in the desert, where he 'ate herbs like the gazelle and drank with the wild cattle'. His interest was

aroused, but finding no one who dared approach the creature to bring him in, he conceived the idea of using one of the temple prostitutes as a decoy. At his suggestion she waited beside the water-pool where the beasts came down to drink until a day when Enkidu came with them. As Gilgamesh had expected, on seeing her remove her veil, he was captivated, and took her to live with him for seven days. After that she had no difficulty in luring him away from the beasts, who in point of fact no longer liked him, and instructing him in the more normal usages of human life. Then she brought him into the city. Gilgamesh, hearing of their arrival, endeavoured to recover the prostitute, and a battle royal ensued, during which they 'grappled and snorted like bulls, they shattered the threshold and the wall quivered'. Gilgamesh got the worst of the fight, but it ended with the two becoming sworn friends.

The epic continues with a long account of their combined exploits, including an expedition to the 'cedar forests' to destroy the monster Khumbaba who lived there. On his return to Erech, Gilgamesh is seen by the goddess Ishtar having a bath, but stoutly refuses her importunate request that he should become her husband. The story grows more and more Rabelaisian when in anger she sends a colossal bull against him, and, watched by the people of Erech from the city walls, he and his friend destroy and mutilate it.

Enkidu's death must have been related upon a missing fragment of the next tablet, for we find Gilgamesh lamenting over his body, and himself becoming obsessed with the idea of death. 'The fate of my friend lay heavily upon me,' he says. 'My friend whom I loved has become like the dust. Shall not I myself also be obliged to lay me down and never again rise up to all eternity?' The rest of the poem is taken up with his long and adventurous quest for the secret of immortality. This he has eventually to abandon, but is much comforted by the advice of a mysterious wine-seller 'who lives in the depths of the sea'. She tells him: 'Thou wilt not find the life thou seekest. When the gods made mankind, they appointed death for mankind; clutched life with their own hands. As for thee, Gilgamesh, let thy belly be full. Day and night be thou merry. Be thy head washen. Be thou bathed in water. Pet the child clasping thy hand.

Let the wife be happy in thy bosom. That, verily, is the lot of mankind.' The epic ends with the shade of Enkidu, summoned from the underworld by his friend, piously reflecting upon the happy fate of those who are buried with full religious ceremony.

Quite apart from its being the world's oldest literary work, the story of Gilgamesh is worth reading because its background of everyday life in 'high-walled Erech' throws into relief the figure of one of the 'world's first great, white-bearded kings' as no Sumerian statue ever can.

The First Dynasty of Ur is the next on the list, and it starts with the name Mes-an-ni-pad-da. This was the first Sumerian king's name mentioned in the chronicles to be linked with reality by an archaeologist's discoveries. Sir Leonard Woolley, excavating a Sumerian temple at Al-Ubaid soon after the last war, discovered a stone tablet, now in the Iraq Museum, on which are inscribed the words 'A-an-ni-pad-da, son of Mes-an-ni-pad-da, King of Ur, has built a temple for Ninkharsag'.⁶ This discovery gave new significance to the king-lists, and it was not surprising when other royal names were linked with buildings or offerings of one sort or another, by archaeologists working at other Sumerian sites.

One other interesting archaeological corroboration of the chronicles deserves mentioning. Two of the latest dynasties are attributed respectively to the cities of Akshak and Mari, and there had always been reason for thinking them contemporary. During the early nineteen-thirties, a great quantity of late Sumerian votive statues was discovered by an expedition of the University of Chicago at a mound on the Diyalah river called Khafaje. This mound was soon afterwards identified as the ancient city of Akshak.* By a curious coincidence another expedition sent out by the Louvre was at the same time working on the Euphrates just beyond the Syrian frontier at a site called Tell Hariri, which had at once proved to represent the ruins of Mari. The director of the American expedition, visiting his French colleague at the end of one of his digging seasons, was astonished to see amongst the Mari finds Sumerian statues so exactly resembling those found at Akshak, three hundred miles away, that one

* Some authorities prefer to identify Akshak with Tell Omar, the ancient Seleucia.

would have said they were the work of the same sculptor. Other objects discovered by the French had such exact counterparts among the Khafaje finds that they could only have been made within a few years of each other.⁷

Failing any reliable evidence of actual political events during the period of the Sumerian dynasties, we at least find that archaeology can supply us with a fairly detailed picture of contemporary life in the sphere of both religious and domestic behaviour. The general political and military set-up can also be judged by what survived into the better-recorded period after the Akkadian conquest, and will be mentioned later.

Lower Iraq, or the 'Plain of Shinar' as later the Biblical phrase goes, extended from the Persian Gulf northwards to approximately the line passing through the modern town of Beled, on the Tigris, where the flat, river-deposited alluvium ends and the undulating pastureland of northern Iraq begins.* It was generally spoken of as 'Sumer and Akkad', Akkad being the northern half, but the line of demarcation between the two, at the time when the Sumerians were in the ascendancy, has never been accurately established. Northern Iraq, which afterwards became Assyria, was at that time known as Shubartu, Persia was Elam, and the western desert Martu. The title given to Sumerian kings was 'Lord of Sumer and Akkad' or sometimes 'Shepherd of the Black-headed People'. Their country was divided up into half-a-dozen small city-states, each with a capital city from which the state took its name, and each in turn, or sometimes two at once, would have control over the whole federation. Inter-state wars occurred with great frequency, but must have been on a very modest scale, and were usually the result of disputes about the distribution of irrigation-water.

The Sumerian religion was woven around a pantheon of many gods. Here, as in ancient Egypt, they were occasionally grouped into trinities, and the most formidable of these was composed of An, Enlil and Enki, gods of the elements. Then there is a group of goddesses, Ninkharsag, Ningal, Bau and Ninsun, all really representing different aspects of the eternal

* Anyone who has motored northward from Baghdad in wet weather will recollect his relief at passing from the alluvial mud to the pebbly conglomerate, between Beled and Samarra.

mother-goddess, a conception which runs right through the history of religious thought, from the strangely distorted figurines of the stone-age cave-dwellers down to the Holy Virgin of the Catholic faith. Dumuzi, god of fertility, who has already been mentioned, is chiefly connected with the symbolical myth of death and resurrection. Like the foliage which he represents, he dies in the winter and 'descends beneath the mountain'. In the spring the mother-goddess intercedes for him, and the sun-god, Shamash, returns to lead him back to earth. The moon-god is Nannar or Sin, and there is in addition a group of warrior-gods or slayers of mythical animals, often represented on cylinder-seals. Finally there is Imdugud, the lion-headed bird, and Zu, the storm-bird, who stole the 'Tablets of Destiny' from Enlil. The Sumerian heaven was populous, and these are only a few of the names already known of its inhabitants.

Sumerian builders were prolific, so that scores of their temples have now been excavated in Iraq, many of them dedicated to one or other of the gods and goddesses mentioned above. The larger cities usually had a patron-god to whom their largest shrine was dedicated, as, for instance, Nergal at Kutha or Enlil at Nippur. The central group of temples in such cities was sometimes enclosed by a high *temenos* wall. Rising above this, the people living in the outer town would see the *ziggurat* or staged tower, the artificial mountain at the summit of which the Sumerians celebrated their most sacred ceremonial. Something is known of this ritual from inscriptions, pictures carved in stone and some other sources. It took place at the great annual festival celebrating the new year. A young priest and priestess were elected to fulfil the principal role, and for the time being became identified with the god and goddess of fertility. After visits to various temples they were led in a religious procession to the *ziggurat*, where, in the presence of a single priest, they consummated the symbolical union which alone would insure the success of the new season's crops. Having no further function as human beings, the two then apparently died, and were buried. It seems extremely probable that the rich tombs found at Ur, whose owners bore names with no titles or insignia of temporal royalty, were in fact the victims of this rite. Buried with them, in addition to all their personal

finery and possessions, was a large troupe of attendants, including armed guards, ladies in waiting richly clothed, other servants and even wheeled wagons with the oxen still yoked to them. The great treasure of jewellery, gold and silver vessels, musical instruments, gaming-boards and finely wrought weapons which these sepulchres contained have been divided between the Iraq Museum and British Museum.⁸

The temple of Ninkharsag at Al-Ubaid, whose dedication by King A-an-ni-pad-da has already been mentioned, was raised on a simple square platform of mud-brick, about twenty feet high. In later dynasties, a second and a third storey were added to this type of platform, and finally the many-staged, pyramidal *ziggurat* was evolved. An account given by the Greek writer Herodotus, many hundreds of years later, of the *ziggurat* which he found still in use in Babylon is interesting, because it ends with his version of the fertility cult. He says: 'In the middle of the precinct there is a tower of solid masonry, a furlong in length and breadth, upon which was raised a second tower and on that a third, and so on up to eight. The ascent to the top is on the outside, by a path which winds round all the towers. When one is about half-way up, one finds a resting-place and seats, where persons are wont to sit some time on their way to the summit. On the topmost tower there is a spacious temple, and inside the temple stands a couch of unusual size, richly adorned, with a golden table by its side. There is no statue of any kind set up in the place, nor is the chamber occupied of nights by any one but a single native woman, who, as the Chaldaeans, the priests of this god, say, is chosen for himself by the deity before all the women of the land. They also declare—but I for my part do not credit it—that the god comes down in person into this chamber and sleeps upon the couch.'⁹

Smaller Sumerian temples have certain standard elements which throw some light on the principles of worship.¹⁰ The sanctuary is usually a long, rectangular chamber. In shrines found in the south of Iraq it has an entrance at the end, but in the north a door on the cross-axis is preferred. At the end most distant from the door, a rectangular altar is built against the wall and upon this the cult-statue stands. In some cases there is a small flight of steps leading up to it at the side, and there is almost always some sort of drain to

carry off libations. In the centre of the room there are small pedestals upon which offerings are placed, and sometimes a hearth for a fire or a brazier on a terracotta stand shaped like a tiny dwelling-house. Round the walls runs a low bench, upon which stand portrait-statues of local notables, who thus contrive to be perpetually represented in the presence of the god in an attitude of prayer. Higher up, the wall is decorated with square stone plaques carved in relief with standard scenes from Sumerian life. Incense is burnt in small crucibles resting on a copper tripod, sometimes in the form of a naked priest. The offerings at the shrine consist of amulets in the shape of birds, beasts or fish, ceremonial mace-heads, or variously shaped vessels beautifully carved in many kinds of stone, personal belongings such as toilet-implements or beads, or, in the poorer shrines, bowls of grain or even charcoal.

In the outside world business deals and personal messages are recorded, still in pictographic writing, on clay tablets and sealed with the now ubiquitous cylinder-seal. These little objects are one of the most familiar features of Sumerian archaeology. In this and the Akkadian period, their carving, which was done in reverse and often on a hard material, became so surprisingly accomplished that elaborate mythical or ritual scenes could be portrayed. They are consequently one of the most fertile sources of information about both the daily life and the beliefs of their wearers. It is also known that they were sometimes worn at the head of a long copper pin, and there is a Babylonian tradition of how the courtiers of King Sargon of Akkad 'slew him with their seals'. They also recall the Old Testament episode when Judah gave 'his staff and his seals' as a pledge to a woman who proved to be his daughter-in-law, disguised with a veil.

At banquets the Sumerians sat in groups to drink a liquid closely resembling beer. A jar of the drink stood on the floor between them and they drew it up through long metal tubes. Music was made on harps of several shapes. For amusement they boxed, wrestled and hunted, or raced in light two-wheeled chariots, to which four wild asses were yoked, controlled by reins running down to a ring in the lip. They dressed largely in sheepskins and woven wool; they wore their hair long, with a beard but no moustache. They were

short in stature and had large curved noses; the shape of their skulls was of two types technically known as Armenoid and Mediterranean. Racially they are considered to have been Japhetite.

The only evidence available of foreign trade in Sumer is derived from an examination of the raw materials used in the manufacture of objects in everyday use. All sorts of stones and metals, for instance, had to be imported from abroad, and in some cases it is possible to identify, or at least guess at, their place of origin. Bitumen was of course brought from the pitch-wells at Hit on the Euphrates; an analysis of copper ore found at Ur showed it to have come from Qman, and it is probable that the Caucasus was another source of supply; silver came from Cilicia, and gold from Elam or north Syria; limestone may have been brought from Jebel Simran in the south or shipped down the Tigris from the Mosul area. Lapis lazuli was the semi-precious stone most commonly used in Sumerian jewellery, and its provenance is not at all certain; the nearest known source is on the frontiers of Persia and India. Shell and carnelian could easily be picked up on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

It is obvious that the integrity of Sumer and Akkad could not have been maintained in the face of jealous and unruly neighbours without the help of an equipped and disciplined army. We have evidence of this in the famous inlaid 'standard' found at Ur, and its three registers of little pictures show many interesting military details (see plate facing page 48).⁸ There are four-wheeled war chariots drawn by double yokes of asses, with a spearman standing behind the driver and a quiver of spears fixed to the dash-board. These spears are known to have been of two types, having either pronged butts for use with a throwing-thong or plain butts for in-fighting. The infantry have conical copper helmets, sheepskin kilts and heavy felt cloaks. They are armed with short spears, battle-axes or daggers. There is no sign of bows and arrows, but many types of contemporary arrow-heads have been found.

A fragment of a stone stela of the time of Eannatum, an early governor of Lagash, gives another picture of an army going into battle. It is known as the 'Stela of the Vultures' and is at present in the Louvre.¹¹ Here then is an advance

in tactical science, for the infantry, dressed much the same as before, now have large rectangular shields, linked together with long pikes projecting from behind them, in the manner of the phalanx. The king is wearing a helmet modelled to resemble a wig, like the magnificent gold ceremonial wig, belonging to an individual called Mes-kalam-dug, which was found at Ur and is now in the Iraq Museum.⁸

Eannatum was one of a line of Sumerian *patesis** or governors who ruled in Lagash during the last years before the Akkadian conquest, and concerning whom a good deal is known from inscriptions found by a French expedition at Telloh, the modern name of Lagash. The first of the line, Ur-nina, was evidently a man of peace, for there are records of his building temples and digging irrigation canals. On several carved reliefs he is depicted, like the effigy of a Tudor nobleman on his tomb, with a long line of attendant children. One of these was Eannatum, whose military triumph is commemorated on the 'Stela of the Vultures'. He took up the perpetual quarrel between Lagash and the neighbouring state of Umma on the subject of water-supplies, won a battle and slew the Umma *patesi*. The boundary between the two states was then fixed advantageously to Lagash, and Umma made to pay tribute. This is perhaps the first authentically recorded military campaign in the history of the world.

Encouraged by his success, Eannatum then aspired to further glory. He did in fact succeed in conquering Ur, Erech, Kish and Opis, and must for a time have become king of Sumer and Akkad; in one inscription he even claims to have conquered Elam. But his triumph was short-lived, for soon Umma revolted, and in the struggle which followed he was killed. His successor, Entemena, feeling that the irrigation dispute should be ended once and for all, dug a new canal to bring water from the Tigris to Lagash; this is still in use under the name Shatt-al-Hai.†

The next governor of Lagash about whom much is known is Urukagina. After throwing off allegiance to Kish, he was

* It is now suggested that the word *patesi* ought to be read *isaku*. The phonetic value of some cuneiform characters is still doubtful.

† In order to realize the vital importance of water to Umma, one need only glance at the city's ruins, which today are situated in the middle of one of the driest and most desolate wastes of south Iraq. I endeavoured to visit them by car recently, but was prevented by a swirling and choking storm of brown dust.

able to proclaim himself king of Lagash and Sumer and was inspired by his new dignity to set about reforming the state. Most of his reforms are directed against extortion by the priesthood. The high priest might no longer 'come into the garden of a poor mother and take wood therefrom, nor gather fruit in tax therefrom'. Burial-fees had become extortionate and should be reduced to less than a fifth; the clergy and the high officials were forbidden to share the revenues of the god between themselves and to use the temple lands and cattle as their own. Finally, there was apparently room for new legislation to protect the poor peasant who found himself in the situation described in the Old Testament story of Naboth's vineyard. Urukagina also rebuilt all the principal shrines of Lagash, but was unhappily fated to see them destroyed again in yet another war with Umma, during which he also lost his life.

Amongst the tablets which the French found at Telloh was a lament written by some priest of Lagash on this very occasion. It starts with a long invective against the men of Umma, who 'have shed blood in the shrine of Enlil and in the shrine of the Sun-god. . . . They have carried away the silver and the precious stones and have destroyed the statue'. It ends with the words: 'Of sin on the part of Urukagina, King of Girsu, there is none. But as for Lugal-zaggisi, *patesi* of Umma, may his goddess Nidaba bear this sin upon her head!' Lugal-zaggisi, who is here mentioned for the first time, does not seem to have been content with the destruction of Lagash, for he went on to the conquest of the whole delta. He soon transferred his government to Erech and invited all the principal gods of the southern cities to become his patrons. In the inscribed ritual vases which were found at Nippur he makes the extravagant claim that his dominion extends 'from the Lower Sea by Tigris and Euphrates to the Upper Sea'—the Mediterranean. If in fact it did so, it was not for long, since early in his reign there were the first signs of the Akkadian revolt which sealed the fate of the Sumerian federation as a whole.

The revolt was initiated by Sargon, an Akkadian cup-bearer to Ur-ilbaba, the contemporary governor of Kish. Sargon of Akkad is the first really striking personality to emerge as a historical character from the obscurity of records

and archaeological evidence. Little is known about the early stages of the insurrection which he contrived against his master at Kish, and when his story opens he has already proclaimed himself king and established a rival capital to Erech at Agade. There is, however, some evidence as to his humble origin.

Sargon himself seems to have by no means been ashamed of it. 'My mother', he declares, 'was humble, I knew not my father. My father's brother was a dweller in the mountain. My town was Azupirāni that is set on the bank of the Euphrates. My humble mother conceived me; secretly brought me to birth; set me in an ark of bulrushes; made fast my door with pitch. She consigned me to the river, which did not overwhelm me. The river carried me along to Akki, the irrigator.... Akki the irrigator brought me up to be his son; . . . set me to gardening. During my gardening, lo, the goddess Ishtar loved me, and for fifty-four years the kingship was mine.' This story is perhaps no more remarkable than that of Ku-bau, the Semitic queen of the Third Dynasty of Kish, who was reputed to have once been a brothel-keeper.

The Akkadians, who had already filtered into Iraq in sufficient numbers to give their name to the region around modern Baghdad, were a Semitic people from the west or north-west. It seems probable that their relationship to the true Sumerians had, to begin with, been that of a subordinate class, but they now appear as their political rivals. With the arrival of Sargon as champion of an independent Akkad, Lugal-zaggisi found his southern states in considerable danger. The new Akkadian king however did not yet turn his attention to the south, since he would thus have exposed himself to being attacked in the rear by the savage northern tribes. His early campaigns were therefore successively conducted against Mari, Ashur, Kirkuk and Arbil, thereby assuring the allegiance of northern Iraq. Next he marched against the Guti, tribesmen of the Zagros mountains, turned south into the marshes east of the Tigris, and finally made his first raid into Sumer, capturing Lagash.

Sargon made one more expedition northward and subdued the tribes of southern Anatolia before he felt his position sufficiently consolidated to deal with Lugal-zaggisi. He then

easily defeated the Sumerian national army, and one by one the great cities of the south were compelled to submit to Akkadian rule. This, as it proved, involved little hardship, for Sargon treated their religious sanctity with the greatest respect, everywhere rebuilding shrines and dedicating costly offerings to the gods. At Ur, for instance, he rebuilt almost the entire temple precinct and consecrated his eldest daughter as priestess of the god Nannar; in Nippur he rebuilt the great temple of Enlil.*

After consolidating his power in the river valley, Sargon embarked on a succession of foreign wars, and, considering that military strategy and all forms of organized warfare were still in their infancy, it is remarkable how far his conquests extended. Elam was overcome without apparent difficulty, while to the north-west his armies soon reached the Mediterranean. Cilicia, the Orontes valley and the Lebanon are three districts which are known to have been colonized, while one story even speaks of an invasion of Cyprus. A legend called 'The King of Battle', which concerns one of Sargon's military expeditions, has been found inscribed on tablets at such remote places as Tell-el-Amarnah in Egypt and Boghazkeui in Anatolia. It gives an account of how, appealed to by certain Mesopotamian merchants who had formed a trading colony in Cappadocia and had been oppressed by the local native king, Sargon crosses the Taurus and carries his arms into the heart of Asia Minor; on his return he was careful to 'bring back specimens of foreign trees, vines, figs and roses for acclimatization in his own land'. In Mesopotamia itself, the increased prosperity which must have resulted from these imperial enterprises unhappily seems not to have reconciled the country to Akkadian domination, for King

* On a visit to Nippur, in February 1942, I was standing in the deep cutting made by the American excavators at the beginning of the century, and looking up at the *ziggurat*, which is preserved almost up to its full height and very impressive. I was trying to identify the part of the structure built by the Akkadian kings, when my eye was caught by the corner of a large terracotta stamp projecting from the side of the excavation. On one side was a convenient handle and on the other a neat square inscription was modelled in little raised ridges of clay, in negative. It was about the middle of the third millennium that the Sumerians began stamping their baked bricks with the dedication of the building in which they were to be used, and here, undoubtedly, was the first of the stamps used for the purpose ever found intact. The inscription was a simple one, it said: 'I, Shar-gali-shari, King of Akkad, have built a temple for Enlil.'

Sargon's reign ended with a general revolt of all the Sumerian provinces, and the great leader himself was treacherously murdered.

The reigns of Sargon's two successors, Rimush and Manishtusu, seem to have been fully occupied with the suppression of the Sumerian rebellion and another which had broken out in Elam. The complete pacification of the empire seems in fact not to have been effectively attained until Sargon's son, Naram-sin, came to the throne. Naram-sin reigned for over fifty years, and long before his death consented to be deified. He not only consolidated his father's conquests but succeeded in extending them considerably. A rock-carving at Pir Hussein, near Diarbekr, commemorates his conquest of that region, and there is a famous carved stela on which he is represented at the head of the Akkadian army, defeating a people called the Lulubu in the Zagros mountains east of the Tigris. The carving of the stela of Naram-sin, like the cylinder-seals of the Akkadian period, is very fine indeed, and for the first time in Mesopotamian art there is an attempt to depict a landscape with trees and hills.¹¹ Some idea of the excellence of Akkadian craftsmanship may also be obtained from the magnificent copper head of an Akkadian king, found beneath the Ishtar temple at Nineveh, and now in the Iraq Museum. The king wears the wig-helmet of his Sumerian predecessors, which is admirably modelled, but the eyes, which were probably of more precious metal, have been hacked out in antiquity.

Sargon's empire did not long survive the death of Naram-sin. Under pressure of continual attacks by the Guti, barbaric tribesmen from the north, it gradually disintegrated, and Mesopotamia itself was overrun by a people 'who knew not kingship'. Soon the chroniclers are asking in despair 'who was king, who was not king?', and have only a period of complete anarchy to record. There is a long list of outlandish Gutian kings, concerning whom we know nothing, but contemporarily with the tail-end of this list there appears a new dynasty of *patesis* ruling in Lagash, presumably under sufferance of their Gutian overlords; of the times and activities of these 'Governors of Lagash' we are fortunately better informed, mostly as a result of the Telloh excavations.

The sculptors of the period specialized in boldly stylized

portrait-statues, mostly in black diorite, and the celebrated Gudea alone is represented by eighteen of these figures, all of which have survived. Some of the best are treasures of the Louvre, but the Iraq Museum has a good representative seated figure with an inscription, and there is part of a magnificent, almost life-size statue of the same type in the British Museum.¹⁰ Gudea's dictatorial personality is well portrayed in these carvings, which were for a long time the criterion of early Mesopotamian art.

Hundreds of inscriptions found by the French deal almost exclusively with Gudea's commercial and building activities, and the sources of the materials which he mentions make it clear that the extensive trade connexions established by the Akkadian kings between Iraq and the neighbouring countries have not been entirely disrupted by the interference of the Guti. There is no reference to any military activity, which was evidently beyond the scope of a provincial governor at that time; but there is also no direct reference to the Gutian tyrants. This suggests that already the southern states aspired to a measure of independence. By the end of Gudea's reign Erech was in open rebellion, and there were the first signs of a general Sumerian revival. Utu-khegal, the Erech prince-ling, celebrated his triumph in the following words: 'Gutium, the viper of the hills, he who was the enemy of the gods, who had taken away the kingship of Sumer to the mountain; and filled Sumer with hostility, had carried away both husband and wife, had carried away with him both parent and child; had set hostility and wickedness in the land: Enlil, god of the countries, laid a charge upon Utu-khegal, the mighty man, king of Uruk, king of the Four Quarters, the king in whose words there is no deceit, to blot out his name.' Utu-khegal in fact set his foot upon the neck of the last Gutian king, Tirigan, and from that moment the barbarian domination of Sumer was at an end.

Utu-khegal does not seem to have been able to sustain for long his new role as liberator of Sumer. He was soon supplanted by Ur-nammu, Governor of Ur, who proclaimed himself king of Sumer and Akkad and so became the founder of a most distinguished and progressive new line of Sumerian kings. Here again we are on firmer historical ground, for much of Sir Leonard Woolley's long period of detailed and

conscientious research in the ruins of Ur was devoted to studying the remains of this 'Third Dynasty'.¹² The first thing that became obvious about Ur-nammu (whose name used to be given as Ur-engur) was that he had been a prolific builder and an able reformer at Ur: his name and titles stamped on baked bricks testified to his having rebuilt, on a grander scale than ever before, all the city's principal edifices. These included the temples of Nannar and Ningal and the great *ziggurat* tower itself, as well as the royal palace and the city wall. But his enterprise was not restricted to Ur alone, for Lagash, Eridu, Umma, Larsa and Adab were other cities whose temples were magnificently rebuilt by the new king. He also turned his attention to dredging and partially re-digging the canal system, which was so vital to Sumer's prosperity, and which had doubtless fallen into a state of serious neglect during the chaos of the Gutian inter-regnum. Again there are few records of military activity at this period. Ur-nammu is usually represented in carved relief inviting an angel of fertility to pour forth a bounteous stream of water on the land, or in the guise of a mason piously receiving instructions from the gods as to the building of a temple.

After Ur-nammu came his son Dungi, sometimes rather disconcertingly referred to as Shulgi, who also had a long and active reign at Ur, building and consecrating many temples. The chronicle states that Dungi 'cared greatly for the city of Eridu, which is on the shore of the sea'.*

Eridu was traditionally the oldest city of Sumer, and its temple of Ea the water-god was the most revered in all the south country, so that the king's devotion to the place may well have had a political motive. On the other hand, he laid waste the temple of E-sagila at Babylon which had been rebuilt and endowed by Sargon and successive kings of Agade and was probably regarded as the religious centre of Akkad. Since Dungi had nothing material to fear from Babylon, as yet a town of no military importance, and so far from being

* The ruins of Eridu, like those of Umma and Adab, now stand in a desolate waste of sand, from which the sea has long since receded a hundred miles or more; yet there is still a low cliff to indicate the line of the old foreshore, and an abundance of pebbles and sea-shells. Eridu has scarcely been touched by excavators, and the *ziggurat*, with its fine staircase almost intact, emerges at times from its mantle of sand drifts.

generally an iconoclast was everywhere building and restoring the temples of the Sumerian gods, and did not hesitate to show honour to a foreign deity such as Shushinak of Susa, this isolated act of destruction must reflect the same nationalist policy as dictated his patronage of Eridu.

Some idea of the efficient organization of the empire in Dungi's time can be obtained from a group of tablets found at Lagash. They show that 'the local governors owed their appointment to the king as did also minor officials, and though their authority in their own provinces was considerable, the administration was largely directed from the central government at Ur; the *patesi* might himself have to report in person to headquarters, couriers passed frequently along the roads with instructions, and imperial officers were dispatched from Ur on special missions. Incidentally this meant further organization, for not only had the roads to be kept in repair but provision had to be made for the transport and rationing of officials passing through on business'.¹¹

This arrangement must have greatly reduced the nuisance-value of the provincial *patesis* as potential rebels against the central government in Ur. The whole long period of Dungi's reign was one of great prosperity, for though Mesopotamia enjoyed internal peace, foreign conquest had included within the boundaries of the empire the sources of supply of many commodities, such as stone and metal, which were unobtainable in the river valley. Peaceful trading increased annually, as may be realized from the great mass of business tablets of this period deposited in all the Sumerian cities; freight-bearing ships from the furthest ports of the Persian Gulf tied up alongside the quays of Ur.

Less is known about the last three kings of the dynasty, but long before Dungi's death southern Iraq had reached one of its peak-points of prosperity and progress, so that little remained for them to do, save enjoy the fruits of their predecessors' labour.

The fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur marked the beginning of the end of the Sumerian Empire as a whole. It came with surprising suddenness in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Ibi-sin. Amorites from Mari started a revolt on the middle Euphrates, and while the armies of Ur were endeavouring to drive them from Isin, which they had occupied, Elamite

forces from the east crossed the Tigris and overran Sumer. From the havoc caused by the double invasion the Sumerians never recovered, and their history as an independent nation stops at this point. Sir Leonard Woolley quotes a contemporary lamentation found in the ruins of Nippur, in which the fate of Sumer is already linked with that of the last king of Ur.¹¹ It runs :

When they overthrew, when order they destroyed
Then like a deluge all things together the Elamite consumed.
Whereunto, O Sumer, did they change thee ?
The sacred dynasty from the temple they exiled
They demolished the city, they demolished the temple,
They seized the rulership of the land.
By the command of Enlil order was destroyed,
By the storm-spirit of Anu hastening over the land it was
seized away.
Enlil directed his eyes towards a strange land.
The divine Ibi-sin was carried to Elam.

The remaining years of the third millennium B.C. witness the death-throes of a great nation. The period is generally known as the 'Dynasty of Isin and Larsa', because in these two provinces, promoted for the last time to the doubtful privilege of calling themselves city-states, two lines of governors reigned simultaneously, alternately allying themselves with the Elamites or squabbling among themselves. It is possible, though not easy, to reconstruct the story of these two hundred years of internecine struggles between the divided southern provinces and their foreign rivals, during which the Sumerian Empire peacefully disintegrated. But since the process really consists of stringing together the evidence of a series of isolated texts such as dedications, date-formulas or genealogical inscriptions, and amplifying or disguising its inadequacy with the conventional phrases and speculations used by historians to create a narrative, I do not here propose to make the attempt. By far the most significant political development during the period is the meteoric rise of a new state in the very centre of southern Iraq, with sufficient virility to challenge both the surviving Sumerian authority and the interference of Elam. This was Babylon, where a group of western Semites had already presumed to adopt as their patron an obscure Akkadian god called Marduk, thus flouting the contemporary Sumerian tradition, and were

already asserting themselves as a force to be reckoned with in the tangle of inter-state alliances. The Babylonians only needed a leader of sufficient calibre forcibly to re-unite southern Iraq against its foreign invaders, and him they eventually found in the person of Hammurabi. The Sumerians were destined to have one more flicker of independence twenty-five years later in the time of Hammurabi's son Samsu-iluna, but their rebellion was ruthlessly crushed. The razing of the walls of Ur symbolized their end. After this, historically little more is heard of them. 'Their language, though long fallen out of popular use, might long survive in religious texts, to be studied by the curious and painfully understood by the aid of a dictionary; but the race had gone, exhausted by worry, sapped by decay, swamped by the more vigorous stock which had eaten of the tree of their knowledge.'

Here is Sir Leonard Woolley's final appraisal of the Sumerian contribution to world culture:

'Their civilization, lighting up a world still plunged in primitive barbarism, was in the nature of a first cause. We have outgrown the phase when all the arts were traced to Greece, and Greece was thought to have sprung, like Pallas, full-grown from the brain of Olympian Zeus. We have learnt how that flower of genius drew its sap from Lydians and Hittites, from Phoenicia and Crete, from Babylon and Egypt. But the roots go farther back: behind all these lies Sumer.

'The military conquests of the Sumerians, the arts and crafts which they raised to so high a level, their social organization and other conceptions of morality, even of religion, are not an isolated phenomenon, an archaeological curiosity; it is as part of our own substance that they claim our study, and in so far as they merit our admiration we praise our spiritual forbears.'¹¹

CHAPTER III

BABYLON AND ASSYRIA

KING-LISTS,* c. 1970-539 B.C.

BABYLON

ASSYRIA

Early Kings

German excavations at Ashur

Ushpia
Kikia
Zariqu
Enlil-kapkapu
Puzur-ashur I
Shalim-akkum
Ilu-shuma
Irishum I
Ikunum
Sharrukin I
Puzur-ashur II
Akhi-ashur
Rim-sin (of Larsa), 1830
Irishum II

First Dynasty

1900-1600 B.C.

Sumu-abu
Sumu-la-ilu
Zabum
Apil-sin
Sin-muballit
Hammurabi, 1800, ←
the great statesman and law-giver
Samsu-iluna, 1760
Abeshu, 1720
Ammi-ditana, 1690
Ammi-saduga, 1650
Samsu-ditana, 1630

→ Shamsi-adad I, 1820
Ishme-dagan I, 1790
Rimush

Kassite Dynasty

Gandash
Agum I
Kashtiliash I
Ushshi
Abirattash
Kashtiliash II
Tazzigurmash
Kharba-shipak
Agum II, 1540
Kurigalzu I
Meli-shipak I
Nazi-maruttash I
Burnaburiash I, 1520 ←

Adasi
Enlil-bani
Shabai
Sharma-adad I
Gizil-sin
Zimgali
Lulla
Shi-ninua
Sharma-adad II
Irishum III
Shamsi-adad II
Ishme-dagan II
Shamsi-adad III
Puzur-ashur III
Enlil-nasir I
Nur-ili
Ishme-dagan III
Ashur-nirari I, 1555

Kashtiliash III
Agum III
Karaindash I, 1430
Kadashman-harbe I
Kurigalzu II
Kadashman-enlil I

→ **Puzur-ashur IV**, 1530, adjusted
boundary between Assyria and
Kassites
Enlil-nasir II
Ashur-rabi I
Ashur-nirari II
Ashur-bel-nisheshu, recovered
Tigris states from Egypt
Ashur-rim-nisheshu

* Dating according to Albright, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 77, Feb. 1940.

BABYLON

Burnaburiash II, 1365
 Karaindash II
 Kadashman-harbe II
 Kurigalzu III
 Nazi-maruttash II
 Kadashman-turgu
 Kadashman-enlil II
 Kudur-enlil
 Shagarakti-shuriash
 Kashtiliash III
 Enlil-nadin-shum
 Kadashman-harbe II
 Ramman-shum-iddin
 Ramman-shum-nasir
 Meli-shipak II
 Marduk-apal-iddin I
 Zababa-shum-iddin (Ilbaba)
 Enlil-nadin-akhe

End of Kassite Dynasty, about
 1170 B.C.

ASSYRIA

Ashur-nadin-akhi
 Eriba-adad I, 1400
 Ashur-uballit I, 1370, ended
 Mitannian dynasty.
 Enlil-nirari
 Arik-den-ilu
 Adad-nirari I, Assyria extended
 to Carchemish
 Shalmaneser I
 Tukulti-ninurta, conquered
 Babylon
 Ashur-nadin-apli
 Ashur-nirari III
 Enlil-kudur-usu
 Ninurta-pal-ekur I
 Ashur-dan I
 Ninurta-tukulti-ashur
 Mutakkil-nusku
 Ashur-resh-ishi I
 Tiglath-pileser I, Assyria ex-
 tended to Lake Van
 Ninurta-pal-ekur II
 Ashur-bel-kala I
 Enlil-rabi
 Ashur-bel-kala II
 Eriba-adad II
 Shamsi-adad IV
 Ashur-nasir-pal I
 Shalmaneser II
 Ashur-nirari IV
 Ashur-rabi II
 Ashur-resh-ishi II
 Tiglath-pileser II
 Ashur-dan II

Beginning of Accurately
Dated History

Adad-nirari II (911-891)
 Tukulti-ninurta II (890-84)
 Ashur-nasir-pal II (883-59),
 revived Assyrian imperialism:
 moved capital to Nimrud
 Shalmaneser III (858-24), contin-
 ued re-equipping of Assyrian
 army
 Shamsi-adad V (823-10)
 Semiramis (809-06)
 Adad-nirari III (805-782), con-
 quests reached the Mediter-
 ranean
 Shalmaneser IV (781-72)
 Ashur-dan III (771-54)
 Ashur-nirari V (753-46), slain in
 civil war
 Tiglath-pileser III (Pul) (745-27),
 great imperial revival
 Shalmaneser V (727-2)

ASSYRIA

Sargon (Sharrukin) II, (721-05),
culmination of Assyrian power : moved capital to Khorsabad

Sennacherib (705-681), great statesman and conqueror : moved capital to Nineveh, which he rebuilt

Esarhaddon (680-69), invaded Egypt

Ashur-bani-pal (Sardanapallos) (668-26), extended previous conquests : sacked Thebes

Sin-shum-lishir	} (626-12)
Ashur-etil-ilani	
Sin-shar-ishkun	

Ashur-uballit II (611-06), perished in ruins of Nineveh

Destruction of Nineveh by the Medes, 606 B.C.

Neo-Babylonian Dynasty

German excavations at Babylon

Nabopolassar (625-05), revived power of Babylon

Nebuchadnezzar (604-562), created new Babylonian empire :

Jews sent into captivity

Amel-marduk (561-60)

Nergal-shar-usur (559-6)

Labashi-marduk (556)

Nabonidus (555-39), quiet scholar

Belshazzar, general

Conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, 539 B.C.

THE new princes of Babylon were what is known as Amorites—south-Syrian Arabs or Palestinians from *Amurru*, 'the West'. It is uncertain which of the first six did most to establish the little state as a first-class power, but there is no indication of any of them having acknowledged the overlordship of Isin or Larsa. We also know that when Hammurabi, the seventh ruler, came to the throne he found himself in control of a prosperous federation of cities, corresponding in its boundaries approximately to the ancient Akkad. He at once took in hand the subjugation of the other principal Mesopotamian states, beginning with Ashur, a city on the Tigris two hundred miles to the north of Babylon, the birth-place of the great Assyrian nation. This was about the time of Abraham, the first Hebrew patriarch, and a passage from the Book of Genesis, mentioning the names of eastern powers

with whom the Jews were then from time to time in conflict, throws an interesting light on Hammurabi's world. Hammurabi himself is called 'Amraphel king of Shinar', and the list goes on to mention 'Arioch king of Ellasar', who must have been Kudur-mabug, the contemporary Elamite ruler of Larsa; 'Chedorlaomer king of Elam', another good Elamite name, which should read Kudur-lagamar; and finally 'Tidal king of Goiim', evidently one of the Khatti or Hittite princes of Anatolia, for *goyim** refers to the non-Semitic tribes of the north.

So we see Hammurabi at the beginning of his reign successfully making war on a prince of Larsa, presumably the Biblical Arioch. Then there is a period of peace, perhaps imposed on the Mesopotamian states by Chedorlaomer, the powerful king of Elam.

Then again there are two years of war, during which he seems to have succeeded in drawing the whole of southern Sumer on to his side against Elam, and for the first time in this history, hostilities are actually conducted by two generals whose names we know, while Hammurabi himself directs their activities in written dispatches from the capital. 'The testimony of those actual letters, rescripts and dispatches of his, which can be seen any day in the galleries of the British Museum, show us that the later kings of Babylonia were by no means in error when they looked back to him as their exemplar of what a patriarchal ruler should be.'¹³ Yet it is on account of his peacetime accomplishments rather than his military ability that Hammurabi has become known to posterity as one of the world's first great organizers. He 'put forth his powerful hand upon the teeming life of the Babylonian towns, and with a touch he brought in order and system such as Babylonia had never seen before'.¹³ There are fifty-five of his official letters which survive, but there is also another splendid monument to perpetuate his fame. This is a great eight-foot stela of black diorite upon which is inscribed the whole of his re-codification of the old Sumerian laws, occupying about 3,000 lines of cuneiform Babylonian writing. It had been carried off to Susa by a conquering king of Elam, and was there discovered by French excavators, who installed it in the Louvre. At the top of the great pillar there is a scene

* So the modern slang expression 'goy'. Gentile

finely sculptured in low relief, in which Hammurabi himself stands to receive the laws from a seated Sun-god. 'From this monument we have gained a complete knowledge of ancient Babylonian law, and have seen how very equitable most of its enactments were. Those relating to agriculture, to the recovery of debt, and to the conditions of divorce are especially interesting. In the latter improvement had been made since old Sumerian times, when the wife had no rights of divorce whatever, these being reserved only to the man. In Hammurabi's time, however, the law had been modified in favour of the woman, for if she was divorced, her husband had to make proper provision for her maintenance and that of her children of whom she had custody, besides returning the marriage portion. He could only evade these provisions by proving that his wife had been unfaithful or a careless house-keeper; in the latter case he might enslave her The accessibility of the law made law-suits easy and the Babylonians were highly litigious in consequence; most of these law-suits were in connexion with the sale or lease of land, houses, etc. Such sales and leases as well as wills had always to be drawn up in legal form to be valid, as was also the case in Egypt. For a document to be valid, it had to be attested by witnesses, and was usually impressed with the seals of the parties to it.'¹³

The great American historian and archaeologist James Henry Breasted has drawn an attractive picture of Hammurabi engaged upon the actual business of administration.¹⁴ It shows him 'sitting in the executive office of his palace at Babylon with his secretary at his side. In short clear sentences the king begins dictating his brief letters, conveying his commands to the local governors of the old Sumerian cities which he now rules. The secretary draws a reed stylus from a leathern holder at his girdle, and quickly covers the small clay tablet with its lines of wedge groups. The writer then sprinkles over the soft wet tablet a handful of dry powdered clay. This is to prevent the clay envelope, which he now deftly wraps about the letter, from adhering to the written surface. On this soft envelope he writes the address and sends the letter out to be put into the furnace and baked.

'Messengers constantly hand him similarly closed letters. This secretary of Hammurabi is a trusted confidential clerk.

He therefore breaks to pieces the hard clay envelopes in the king's presence, and reads aloud to him letters from all over the kingdom. The king quickly dictates his replies. The flood has obstructed the Euphrates between Ur and Larsa, and of course a long string of boats have been tied up and are waiting. The king's reply orders the governor of Larsa to clear the channel at the earliest moment and make it navigable again. . . .

'The calendar has slipped forward a whole month in advance of the proper season, and the king sends out a circular letter to all the governors, saying, "Since the year hath a deficiency, let the month which is now beginning, be registered as a second month of Elul". But he warns the governors that all taxes otherwise falling due within the next month are not to be deferred by this insertion. Delinquent tax-gatherers are firmly reminded of their obligations and called upon to settle without delay. Prompt punishment of an official guilty of bribery is authorized, and we can see the king's face darken as he dictates the order for the arrest of three officials of the palace gate who had fallen under his displeasure. More than once the governor of Larsa is sharply reminded of the king's orders, and bidden to see that they are carried out at once. . . .

'The chief of the temple bakers finds that royal orders to look after a religious feast at Ur will call him away from the capital city just at the time when he has an important law-suit coming on. He easily obtains an order from the king postponing the law-suit. The king's interest in the religious feast is here as much concerned as his sense of justice, for many of the letters which he dictates have to do with temple property and temple administration, in which he constantly shows his interest.'

During Hammurabi's time there was a tremendous spread in the use of cuneiform writing, and the Semitic Akkadian language which the Babylonians used came to be the normal medium for commercial agreements and communications all over the Middle East. Payments were made in silver by weight. Coins were not yet used, but, when making a small purchase, a man would break off the correct quantity from a coil of thick silver wire which he carried with him to serve as small change. Gold was already fifteen times the value of silver. Hammurabi was long to be remembered in countries

like Syria and Palestine for his scrupulous regulation of the principles of finance and commercial dealing.

Hammurabi died after a reign of 42 years, and was succeeded by his son Samsu-iluna, concerning whom a few facts are known. He suppressed rebellions of various old Sumerian states in the south, but was unable to prevent the foundation of a new independent dynasty on the shores of the Persian Gulf. Thus there came into being the line of princes known as the 'Dynasty of the Sealand', which continued to defy the lords of Babylonia and Assyria for the next thousand years. In the time of the eleventh and last monarch of Hammurabi's dynasty, Babylon was stormed and sacked by the fierce Khatti or Hittite mountaineers from Anatolia, and when they withdrew, leaving the city in ruins, the vacant throne was appropriated by a Kassite king whose successors were to rule there for six hundred years.

The Kassites were an entirely alien people whose sojourn in Iraq is an obscure period in the country's history. They were Indo-Iranians, and part of a westward migration which was already bringing about the colonization of Iran. The list of Kassite kings who ruled over southern Iraq is hardly more than names, and it may not be entirely due to the paucity of written records of the period that this is so. There is evidence to suggest that very little did, in fact, happen during their reigns, and we may therefore infer that their administration was strong and reasonably efficient.* Some of their contacts with neighbouring states are interesting. A king called Agum II, for instance, fought with the Hittites of Anatolia, and triumphantly returned with the statues of the Babylonian gods, which had presumably been carried off during a previous war. Agum III temporarily displaced the Sealanders from their dominion in the south. But most important of all was the first appearance in the middle of the Kassite period of a new state called Mitanni on the north-west frontier of Iraq.

The Mitannians also were a product of the Indo-Iranian migration, and amongst the gods they worshipped were at least three Indian deities. Originally an offshoot of the Hurrians, a formidable people who had come to live in the mountains

* Mr Sidney Smith says: 'It may be that excavations on the site of the town which later became their capital, Dur Kurigalzu (Aqar Quf), would reveal some part of their story.' This possibility is at the moment being considered by the Iraq Directorate of Antiquities.

directly north of Mosul, they took possession of a district roughly corresponding to the Sinjar area and the head-waters of the Khabur river, where the ruins of their curious oval-shaped walled cities can still be seen today. To the west, their progress was barred by the Hittites who had now overflowed southwards out of Anatolia and formed powerful colonies in the Aleppo-Alexandretta area and in 'Hollow Syria' between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. But later the Mitannians seem to have crossed the Euphrates and become masters of these North Syrian Hittites.* Some time in the middle of the second millennium the Mitannians also expanded eastwards into Iraq, and there is reason to suppose that the infant state of Assyria on the upper Tigris was one of the kingdoms which they wrested from the Kassites.

In any case, both Mitannians and Kassites were entirely uncultured people and learnt most of the elements of civilization from the peoples they conquered. Babylonia itself remained distinctively Semitic and seems to have been unaffected in any way by the protracted rule of an alien dynasty.

The first mention of Assyria brings us to the beginnings of a new saga in Iraqi history, and it is well to take a preliminary glance at the geographical setting in which the growth took place of one of the most remarkable powers of the ancient world.

We have mentioned in an earlier chapter the clear and natural division of modern Iraq into two parts—the alluvial plain, south of the prehistoric sea-line, and the undulating pastureland of the north which eventually gives way to wooded foothills and mountains. Above Tekrit, in the valleys of the Tigris and of its two eastern tributaries, the Greater and Lesser Zab, enough rain falls during the winter to produce a crop of wheat without artificial irrigation, and in the spring the uplands are knee-deep in grass and flowers. Vines grow unwatered artificially, and many kinds of fruit-

* It is this period of Mitannian conquest which is represented in Sir Leonard Woolley's most recent excavations at Atchana in the Antioch region, where he found tablets relevant to Mitannian history, in a fascinatingly well-preserved palace of the period.¹⁵ Interesting evidence of a Mitannian or Hurrian occupation of northern Iraq has also been found by American excavators in the ruins of a city called Nuzi, near Kirkuk, which also yielded many tablets.¹⁶

trees. Oaks, poplars and even pine-trees provide timber, while good building stone is always available and easily quarried. It is a more naturally productive country than the south, because agriculture needs little industry, while flocks of sheep and goats, wandering over the grassy hills, rarely lack an adequate pasture. It was here, as we have already seen, that the first civilized races of the world built their villages and tilled their fields, while southern Iraq was still beneath the sea. Yet, curiously enough, from about 4000 B.C. onwards, when the sea had begun to recede, it was to the south that the heritage of human progress shifted, and for the next two millennia northern Iraq remained a land of simple, unambitious shepherds and farmers, content to watch the meteoric rise and fall of the delta states, to suffer their raids, and occasionally even to be colonized by them. By the end, however, of the Kassite dynasty in Babylon a new nation was becoming conscious of its power, and the tide of history was ready to flow northwards again.

The city of Ashur, where the Assyrian state was born, stands on a rocky promontory overlooking the Tigris, near the modern Sherqat. Its situation is important, because just below the town the river enters between low cliffs into a region of red sandstone and gravel hills, from which it does not emerge until it reaches the alluvial plain. North of Ashur are the smiling valleys and broad downs which became the land of Assyria. In about 3000 B.C. Semitic nomads from the western desert settled at Ashur, as their kinsmen the Akkadians were doing in cities further south. They too formed a tiny city-kingdom and adopted the Sumerian principles of culture, which were most obviously suited to their new settled life. Occupying a halfway position between the imperialists of Sumer and Akkad in the south, and the avaricious mountain races to the north, it is hardly surprising that in the early centuries of the third millennium security was unknown to them, and their independence was alternatively sacrificed to raiding Hittites on the one hand, or on the other to some ambitious conqueror like Sargon, Naram-sin or Hammurabi. They seem, however, only to have been toughened by the strain of perpetual war. They were the first people to exploit fully the uses of the horse, which had only comparatively recently been introduced into Iraq by the Kassites, and their

evolution of new tactics for horse-drawn chariots, added to the equipment of a well-disciplined army, was an important part of their preparation for expansion. The line of princes by whom they had almost from the beginning been ruled, up till the fifteenth century B.C., are seldom for us connected with historical events, and it is only at the beginning of the first millennium that we come into the full, detailed narrative of Assyrian history, disclosed by a hundred years of archaeological discoveries in the ruins of Ashur and the later capitals of Assyria. However, an Assyrian inscription of a much later date says that the kingship of Assyria was first established by Bel-ibni. If so, it must have been in about the middle of the eighteenth century, and we should at least pass in review what evidence we have relating to the fortunes of the Assyrian state during the next seven hundred and fifty years.

The first thing that becomes clear is that we have almost no internal Assyrian sources of information; what we have is more or less direct references to events in or affecting Iraq in contemporary Egyptian inscriptions, and also in tablets found among the royal archives at Boghazkeui in Anatolia, the capital of the ancient Hittite kingdom. Naturally these events are mostly connected with Assyria's western and northern contacts, and her relations with Babylonia remain fairly obscure. Nevertheless, even on this subject there is an occasional clue. It appears, for instance, that the first Hittite king who lived at Boghazkeui, Murshilish I, captured and sacked Aleppo (already called Halpa), and that 'thereafter he went to Babylon and destroyed Babylon, attacked also the Hurri, and kept the prisoners and possessions from Babylon at Hattushash [Boghazkeui]'. Now it seems highly probable that this was the raid in which were carried off those Babylonian statues which we have already seen being proudly brought back by a Kassite king, and also that it was the destruction of Babylon by Murshilish which put an end to Hammurabi's dynasty. This again would have been about the middle of the eighteenth century; so that we at least obtain some idea of the obvious insecurity in which Bel-ibni and his immediate descendants must have lived. As though Hittites and Kassites in the south were not enough, they were soon beset in the north by the Mitannian state which the Hurrians had set up.



British Museum

The famous 'Standard' from Ur, showing a Sumerian army going into battle



Iraq Museum

The remains of a temple-tower in the Kassite city of Dur Kurigalzu, near Baghdad. This tower is known as the Aqar Quf, and excavations by the Iraq Directorate of Antiquities still in progress have revealed traces of the staircase by which it was approached and of neighbouring buildings.

Important events in the west also at this time hampered any attempt to develop or expand the Assyrian state. Egypt had come under the rule of the Hyksos or 'Shepherd kings', intruders from Syria and the Phoenician coast who, in addition to temporarily usurping the Egyptian throne, also extended their dominion as far as the Taurus mountains, thus controlling and monopolizing the mineral wealth of Syria and the caravan route to Cilicia and Cappadocia. This had a paralyzing effect on the small eastern states, who were almost entirely dependent on metals obtained from these sources for the proper equipment of their armies. In Assyria particularly, the Hyksos reign in Egypt corresponded to a period of acute depression.

The Hyksos were overthrown by the Pharaoh Ahmose in about 1580 B.C., and the Eighteenth Dynasty opened with a new flourish of Egyptian imperialism, whose effects were soon to be felt even as far away as Ashur. Amenophis I conquered Syria as far as the Lebanon and the Euphrates. On his death, a coalition of states, centred around the city of Kadesh on the Orontes, revolted, and his son Thotmes I had again to fight a Syrian campaign before settling down to organize his empire. He left a carved stela to mark his north-eastern boundary, on the banks of the Euphrates. Fifty years later Thotmes III was also compelled to reconquer Syria, and again fought the Kadesh federation at Kadesh.* He then organized an elephant hunt in the plain of Aleppo, and moved on to the Euphrates, where he found his father's boundary stela and set up a new one beside it. But his subsequent campaigns appear to have carried him much farther afield, and brought Egypt for the first time into contact with Assyria. In a list of states which paid tribute to Egypt at the end of his reign, inscribed on the walls of the great temple at Karnak, Ashur is included as well as many recognizable names of districts, such as Kirkuk, east or north-east of the Tigris.

In the time of Thotmes I Assyria had been a small, compact and prosperous city with control over the Tigris valley and the districts adjoining it. In about 1540 B.C. an Assyrian king, Puzur-ashur IV, had even recorded a dictated peace after a war with a Kassite king, Burnaburiash, when the boundaries

* In this battle there was a curious episode when 'the king of Kadesh sent forth a mare to break the chariot formations of the Egyptians; but the Egyptian general Amenemhet himself slew her, and presented her tail to Thotmes'.

between the two states were adjusted greatly to Ashur's advantage. If in these circumstances Thotmes contrived to exact tribute separately from Assyria and the Tigris states, the first impact of the Egyptian armies in Iraq must have been considerable.

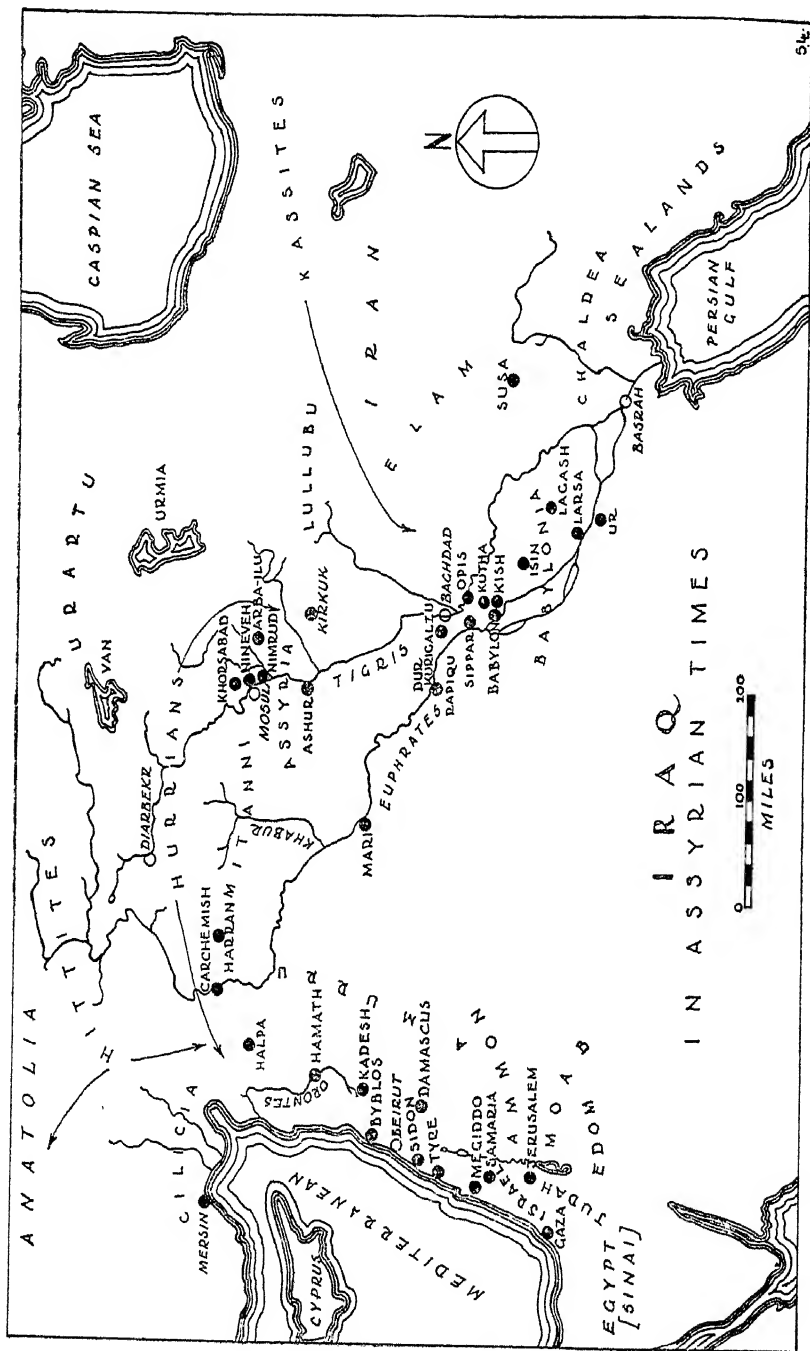
In the time of Puzur-ashur's great-great-grandson, Ashur-bel-nisheshu, there was again a slight revival in Assyrian fortunes. He succeeded in recovering the lost Tigris province, made war on the contemporary Kassite king of Babylon, and again concluded a favourable peace. In the ruins of the city of Ashur itself, which were excavated by German archaeologists at the beginning of the present century, there was evidence to show that he was one of those kings who found it worth while to restore the buildings and renew the fortifications of the town. The next setback was due to the increasing power of Mitanni, with whom Assyria now had a common frontier in the north-west. As a result of negotiations with the Pharaohs Amenophis II and Thotmes IV, the Mitannians had now set up a ruling house of their own, and the second Mitannian king, Astatama, even gave his daughter to Thotmes in marriage. With this powerful alliance established he was also able to exact tribute from Assyria.

For the next hundred years Mitannian kings ruled at their capital, Washshukkanni, a city whose ruins have not yet been identified, somewhere among the head-waters of the Khabur river on the present Turko-Syrian frontier. They were fairly consistently on good terms with the Egyptian Pharaohs, and in a sense constituted a buffer between Egypt and Assyria. This was a time when improved communications throughout the Near East and the orderly conduct of the Egyptian provinces began to permit of a much more general intercourse amongst ruling princes, and the atmosphere of their courts for the first time became genuinely cosmopolitan. 'Syrian princes dressed in Egyptian style; the seal-cutters of Asia Minor put Egyptian religious symbols on the objects they made; Babylonian gems bore devices which were derived from Egyptian and Cretan art; pots from Cyprus made their way to the city of Ashur. Not only material objects changed hands. The library of the Pharaoh included Babylonian literary works, the Hittite kings possessed documents dealing with all the exploits of Sargon and Naram-sin, and an Assyrian

scribe in Egypt made a vocabulary of Egyptian words.' ¹⁷ It was not until the time of the heretic Pharaoh Akhnaton, in about 1370 B.C., that Egypt began to lose grip of her provinces, and the empire to decay. The famous 'Amarnah Letters', which were discovered in Akhnaton's short-lived capital at Tell-el-Amarnah, have given the most vivid picture of conscientious provincial governors making more and more desperate appeals to a neurotic and apathetic Pharaoh for troops and money to sustain the waning prestige of the imperial power. There is even a letter from a Mitannian king, Shubbilulier, who foresees a dangerous increase in the power of Assyria if his support from Egypt is not renewed. His worst fears were realized, for in the time of his son Murshilish the Assyrian king Ashur-uballit made himself master of Mitanni and put an end to the Mitannian dynasty.

With access to the raw materials which she so badly needed suddenly renewed, Assyria from now onwards acquired the status of a first-class military power. From about 1310 B.C., when Adad-nirari I was ruling in Ashur, history becomes better authenticated, and for the next seven hundred years the story of the Assyrian kings is recorded in considerable detail. At the close of Adad-nirari's reign the Assyrian kingdom extended westwards to the Euphrates, and northwards to Carchemish, the modern Jerablus, where Sir Leonard Woolley and T. E. Lawrence were excavating at the time of the outbreak of war in 1914. Adad-nirari also defeated a contemporary king of Babylon and made another favourable treaty. He built largely in the city of Ashur and was responsible for the construction of the famous quay-wall on the Tigris which greatly facilitated the unloading of water-borne merchandise. The stage was thus finally set for Assyrian expansion, and when one of his immediate successors, Tukulti-ninurta, was again victorious in a war with Babylon, the kings of Assyria assumed the title 'King of Sumer and Akkad'.

After a temporary loss of the initiative when Nebuchadnezzar I regained the independence of Babylon, the growth of Assyria continued. In the last years of the twelfth century Tiglath-pileser I extended his conquests to north Syria and to Van, one of the two great mountain lakes in eastern Turkey.



In the west, meanwhile, new rivals had appeared to dispute Assyrian expansion in that direction and prevent their obtaining access to the 'Upper Sea'. The coastal cities of the Phoenician traders, including Tyre and Sidon, were growing yearly more prosperous and powerful, while a new wave of Semitic nomads had gradually formed a chain of states through Palestine and Syria to the upper Euphrates. In the south were the Biblical Hebrews, who had arrived, after their sojourn in the Sinai desert, at about the time of the Hyksos kings in Egypt, and further north the Arameans, who had already come to be referred to as Syrians, and were now building luxurious royal cities, such as Damascus, from which to direct their energetic commercial activities.

One of the Arameans' most important contributions to Near-Eastern progress at this time was a linguistic one. By 1000 B.C. they were using alphabetic writing, which they had borrowed from the Phoenicians. It was the earliest system of writing known which employed exclusively alphabetic signs.* Along with the alphabet the Arameans also received the Egyptian pen and ink, conveniences indispensable in its use. As the Babylonian caravans had in earlier times carried cuneiform tablets throughout western Asia, so the Aramean caravans, with their bills and receipts, began to carry through the same region the alphabet which was to displace cuneiform syllabics. It passed down the Euphrates, to Persia and the south Asiatic lands, and even to the frontiers of India, to furnish at length, even the Indian peoples with their alphabet.¹⁴ The other remarkable accomplishment of the Aramean states was that they succeeded in holding the Assyrians at bay for the best part of three centuries.

Owing to the chance discovery among Assyrian records of a carefully kept list of magistracies, going back as far as the year 893 B.C., it is from that year that accurately dated history may be said to begin. In this way, we know that Ashur-nasir-pal II, one of the first great Assyrian conquerors, reigned from 883-59 B.C. Under his leadership the military ambitions of Assyria finally burst forth with irresistible force, and the foundations were laid of a new Assyrian empire, far exceeding that of Tiglath-pileser I or any of his predecessors of Ashur.

* An older alphabetic script was found at Ras Shamra and dated from about 1400 B.C.

Ashur-nasir-pal had the same ruthless, unsparing nature which characterized almost all his successors on the Assyrian throne and made them a byword for purposeful brutality. It is staggering to think of the appalling amount of physical suffering inflicted on other human beings by this particular king and his descendants over a period of two-and-a-half centuries. The usual procedure after the capture of a hostile city was 'to burn it, and then to mutilate all the grown men prisoners by cutting off their hands and ears and putting out their eyes; after which they were piled up in a great heap to perish in torture from sun, flies, their wounds and suffocation; the children, both boys and girls, were all burnt alive at the stake; and the chief was carried off to Assyria to be flayed alive for the king's delectation'. So far from showing any disposition to deprecate the necessity for such measures, the Assyrians were at great pains to depict them in their carvings with all the realism which they could master; there is no indication that they overrated the efficacy of this crude propaganda.

On the credit side it has to be admitted that to Ashur-nasir-pal and his son Shalmaneser III was due the first effective military organization of Assyria. There was a small but highly trained standing army, supported by an almost unlimited reserve of conscriptable *fellahin*, the hardy yeomanry of Assyria. These were particularly skilled in the use of the bow, and their use as infantry greatly exploited. Chariot-horses and cavalry could now be effectively disabled at a great distance, and like the English yeomen who fought against the French at Crecy and Poitiers, these stalwart bowmen became the most formidable element in the new Assyrian armies. It was also about this time that the Assyrians began to invent ingenious war-machines for assaulting the walls of fortified cities, so that minor princes could no longer defy superior forces from behind their battlements and ramparts.

Ashur-nasir-pal's armies swept in a half-circle through the tribes and cities to the east and north. The Zagros mountains, southern Armenia, the foothills of Anti-Taurus and Cilicia saw them come and go, leaving a trail of burnt cities and subjugated states. They crossed the Euphrates and the Orontes, and in Lebanon received the submission of the rich Phoenician harbour-towns on the coast. Damascus was too overwhelmed by the speed of their advance to offer resistance, but was

saved by the end of the campaigning season. Ashur-nasir-pal thought it best to return through his crescent of conquest and make sure that no resistance remained in his rear. He then set himself with the same energy to consolidate and develop his empire. Fine buildings began to appear in his cities, and to ornament them he employed sculptors whose work from then onwards became the criterion of elegance for all the surrounding nations.

Ashur-nasir-pal abandoned the ancient city of Ashur, where the buildings now rose high upon the accumulated ruins of a dozen earlier towns. For the new capital of his empire he chose the city of Kalakh or Nimrud, which was conveniently placed for defence at the junction of the Tigris and the Greater Zab. It was here that two thousand seven hundred years later an Englishman called Austen Henry Layard astonished the world by his discovery of the Assyrian royal palaces, with their numerous sculptures and written records.*

Ashur-nasir-pal's son, Shalmaneser III, maintained the tradition and policy of his father with somewhat less ostentation. During his reign, for the first time since the life of the patriarch Abraham, the people of Iraq came into direct contact with the Biblical Hebrews. In aspiring to extend his father's conquests in Syria, Shalmaneser found himself faced by three comparatively strong Semitic states, Hamath, Damascus and Israel. Hamath (the modern Hama, a beautiful Arab market-town in the Orontes valley) had previously submitted to Ashur-nasir-pal. Damascus had been saved by the termination of the campaign, while Israel till now had stood beyond the sphere of Assyrian ambitions. In the early years of Shalmaneser, we find Ahab, king of Israel, allied to Hamath and Benhadad II of Damascus. There is no doubt that the alliance was a hastily improvized affair, for during the previous years, as we know from the Old Testament, there had been a bitter and continuous three-sided struggle between Ahab's father, Omri, Jehoshaphat of Judah and Benhadad. In any case the Assyrians now found the combined resistance of the three states by no means contemptible. There was an indecisive battle at Karkar on the Orontes, after which

* Sir Henry Layard was a most able and amusing writer, as well as a great explorer. His long story of his travels in Iraq in the middle of the last century and of the dramatic discoveries which he made at Nimrud and Nineveh makes enjoyable reading.

Shalmaneser withdrew to the Euphrates. But Benhadad in particular had apparently suffered heavy losses from the Assyrian archers, and Ahab treacherously assumed this to be an admirable opportunity of working off an old score. Benhadad had long before seized the city of Ramoth Gilead from his father Omri, and now with the help of Jehoshaphat he attempted to snatch it back. But he had overestimated Benhadad's weakness, and in a battle which followed he was defeated and killed. The story of how an arrow from a bow drawn at a venture struck him down is dramatically told in the Book of Kings.

Benhadad had not long to wait for the renewal of Shalmaneser's attack on Damascus, but during the following eight years he three times succeeded in beating the Assyrians off. How he managed to do so on the last occasion is a mystery, for Shalmaneser had mustered an army of 120,000 men in an exasperated attempt to overwhelm Syrian resistance once and for all.

In Palestine during this period a complicated series of events had taken place (not at all simplified by the fact that the two next kings in order after Ahab of Israel were respectively called Jehoram and Ahaziah, while the son and grandson of Jehoshaphat, who successively reigned over Judah, were also Jehoram and Ahaziah). Ahab had married Baalizebel or Jezebel, the daughter of Eth-baal, the Phoenician prince of Syria, and he and his descendants, the house of Omri, had as a result of Jezebel's paganism been in continual conflict with the religious puritans amongst the Hebrews, headed by the two great prophets Elijah and Elisha. It was Elisha who now stirred up a revolt by anointing and crowning a young man called Jehu, son of Nimshi king of Israel. Jehu at once encompassed the double murder of Jehoram and Ahaziah, the existing kings of Israel and Judah, and directly afterwards there occurred the famous episode at the gates of Jezreel, when the old queen looked out of a window to taunt him, and Jehu contemptuously ordered her own slaves to fling her down.

With Jehu not yet securely established as prince of Judah and Israel, and both states dislocated by a great anti-idolatry purge, the time had arrived for Shalmaneser to strike again at Syria. He defeated Benhadad's successor, Hazael, on the slopes of Mount Hermon, and though he was still unable to

take Damascus, the whole of Syria was now overrun and plundered by the Assyrian armies. As for Jehu, he temporarily bought off the Assyrian king with rich presents. On the great black stone obelisk (which Layard found at Nimrud though he did not know it at the time and the inscription was only deciphered some years afterwards), one little panel represents the paying of tribute to Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, by an individual not quite correctly described as 'Jehu, son of Omri, King of Judah'.¹⁸

Shalmaneser next turned his attention to Babylon, which he defeated in two campaigns in 850-51 B.C. Actually submission to Shalmaneser was small loss to the Babylonians, for Assyria was not a commercial nation, and did not attempt to interfere with the Babylonian trade-routes along the Euphrates to the Phoenician cities and elsewhere.

Towards the end of Shalmaneser's reign there was civil war in Assyria between the partisans of two rival aspirants to the succession, and during the diversion both Babylon and Hamath revolted. When Shalmaneser died and the matter of precedence was finally settled by the accession of Shamsi-adad V to the throne, the latter at once found it necessary to take disciplinary measures against Babylon. Curiously enough he found himself confronted by an army mostly consisting of Elamite and Chaldean mercenaries, which he had little difficulty in routing. He killed 5000 of them, captured 2000 and seized 100 chariots. Soon after this battle Shamsi-adad died. The next king, Adad-nirari III, brought Hamath also back into the fold and continued to extend the empire. Damascus and Israel were again made to pay tribute, and a contemporary inscription records the subjugation of the lands of the Edomites and the Philistines, 'as far as the great sea of the setting sun'.

During the reigns directly succeeding Adad-nirari III's a period of decadence set in in Assyria. The kingdom began to shrink again within its original borders, leaving the states which had been subdued to regain their independence. Syria naturally revolted, and the homeland of Assyria itself was at one time threatened by a warlike race from Urartu on the shores of Lake Van. Furthermore, there was a curious episode in 763 B.C., when a total eclipse of the sun was taken to be a portent of celestial wrath, and created a serious revolution

inside the state. This was suppressed, but a second one in 746 B.C. took a different turn. This time it was a revolt of the military capital, Nimrud, against the degenerate descendants of Ashur-nasir-pal. Ashur-nirari V was slain by the dissident army, and a general called Pul seized the throne. The fact that he at once assumed the name Tiglath-pileser, in memory of his great predecessor, seemed to the Assyrians to portend a renewal of the Assyrian Empire's youth and glory. They were not to be disappointed, for the country did indeed take a new lease of life.

In Babylonia it only needed a show of force to bring the ruling prince Nabunaser to a sense of his dependence on and subjection to Assyria. Tiglath-pileser then turned his attention to Syria and Palestine. He scattered the Vannic armies in the north by a sudden march into the Hakkari country, and then, having eliminated the danger of an attack in the rear, he turned south again towards Syria. The two campaigns which followed resulted in great calamities for the Hebrews and their neighbours. Tiglath-pileser had already been summoned by Ahaz, King of Judah, to assist him against Pekah, King of Israel, and Rezin of Damascus, who had attacked him. Tiglath-pileser now entered Syria and with little difficulty subdued the enemies of Ahaz. Furthermore he marched down the coast road of the Levant, receiving as he went the submission of the Phoenician cities, and reaching eventually the confines of Egypt, where he set up a statue of himself in the palace of the paramount chief of Gaza. Ammon, Edom and Moab sent him tribute, and even a turbulent Arabian queen called Shamsi of Arabi was induced to acknowledge his authority. Now he adopted a policy in the conquered countries which was long to characterize the aftermath of Assyrian campaigns. 'Nearly half the population in each conquered state was carried into captivity and their place taken by foreign captives from Armenia and elsewhere, colonists from Babylonia and others. Thus the native population in each case was weakened beyond recovery, while the introduced foreigners, being hated by the natives as much as were their Assyrian masters, naturally made common cause with the latter and upheld Assyrian rule.'¹³ This was the treatment meted out to the Hebrew tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh who dwelt in Transjordan.

Finally, on his return to Iraq, Tiglath-pileser was compelled to rescue Babylon from the clutches of a Sealand king, whose Chaldean armies were overrunning the south. This he effectively did, and so placed the coping-stone on his edifice of renewed empire. In 728 B.C. he travelled in state to Babylon and 'took the hands of Bel', whereby he assumed the time-honoured title, 'King of Sumer and Akkad'. A year later he died.

In the reign of Tiglath-pileser's successor, Shalmaneser V, Hoshea, King of Israel, relying on support from Egypt, defied Assyria and refused tribute. When an Assyrian army once more invaded Palestine, Hoshea in vain awaited help from the south. He himself was taken prisoner and sent into captivity; Samaria was besieged, but contrived to hold out until news was suddenly received that Shalmaneser had been murdered, and the Assyrian throne seized by a usurper, who had previously been one of the leading generals.

Like Pul before him, the new king assumed the name of an early Semitic hero and became Sargon II (Sharrukin). His accession to the throne initiated the culminating age of Assyrian grandeur and power.

Sargon suffered an initial defeat in Babylonia at the hands of the allied armies of Merodoch-baladan, the Chaldean chieftain from the Sealand on the shores of the Persian Gulf, and an ambitious king of Elam. This was of course the signal for a renewed revolt of the western states, led by the Samaritans, who were still exulting over their defiance of Shalmaneser. Sargon for the time abandoned his attempt to recover Babylonia and marched westwards. Finding Egypt inclined to support the dissident states, he determined for the first time to try conclusions with a Pharaoh, and, meeting an army of Egyptians and Philistines on the Egyptian frontier, he was delighted to find how easily his trained legions dispersed them. An actual invasion of Egypt was only avoided by an offering of rich gifts, which Sargon chose to consider as 'the tribute of Piroe, King of Musri'—presumably Pharaoh, King of Egypt.

Sargon then returned to avenge himself on Israel, with a special eye on the Samaritans. He carried into captivity 'twenty-seven thousand two hundred and ninety of the flower of the nation, who, so we are told by the chronicler of

the Book of Kings, were settled in the Assyrian territory of Gozan and in distant Media, while their place at Samaria was taken by men from Babylon and from Cuthah, and from Avah and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, a mixed horde of Syrian and Babylonian prisoners, from whom, by admixture with the remnant of Israel, the later nation of the Samaritans was formed'. The Samaritans of the New Testament still retained in their religion traces of the Nergal-cult which their ancestors brought with them from Kutha (Tell Ibrahim in southern Iraq), while the modern inhabitants of Samaria have ritual peculiarities which could be explained in the same way.

After this Sargon was compelled to spend ten years in combating the ceaseless revolts and attacks of the northern tribes among the Taurus mountains and in Cilicia. The old Hittite Empire which had centred around Boghaz-keui had now disintegrated and its peoples become confused with immigrant Aryans from the east. Their heritage of culture had passed to a complex of minor states; Phrygians with their Midas-kings, Lydians, Lycians and Carians together challenged Sargon's authority in the north and were by no means easy to subdue, especially when incited to resistance by the irrepressible Urartu of Van. Sargon did not feel inclined to venture out onto the plateau of Anatolia while Egypt and Babylon remained unconquered in his rear. But he did eventually succeed in establishing a line of tribute-paying states from Media to the Aegean, to protect him from anything which might be beyond. Then he returned to Iraq with the idea of finally settling accounts with Babylon. The king, Marduk-apal-iddin, was driven into Chaldea, whither Sargon followed him and completely defeated the Chaldeans. The Sealand was annexed and peopled with wretched Hittites from the mountains, and many captured Chaldeans were sent to Syria. Sargon became king of Babylon, thereby, like Tiglath-pileser, symbolizing the completion of his conquests.

Even during the course of these exacting campaigns, Sargon had found leisure to establish his reputation as a great builder. His greatest accomplishment was at Khorsabad, fifteen miles north of Mosul, where, not content with the temples of Nineveh and the palaces of the older cities of

Nimrud and Ashur, he decided to build himself a new capital city, which he called Dur Sharrukin or 'Sargon's burg'.

It was the site of this city which was excavated in the middle of the last century by Messrs Botta and Place of the Louvre, with such astonishing results.¹⁹ It was a mile square and surrounded by walls of mud-brick twenty-five metres thick. There were seven gateways, mostly ornamented with sculptured colossi. Near the centre of the north-east side there was a vast raised platform of solid brick, its top level with that of the city wall, and on this was built the royal palace, a building incorporating in its plan at least three small temples and a high *ziggurat* approached by a spiral ramp. It was here that Botta unearthed literally miles of sculptured reliefs, depicting and recording the campaigns and triumphs of Sargon's life. They included a spirited representation of his fight with Merodach-baladan in the southern marshes, and even a sea-battle, perhaps connected with his conquest of Cyprus.

On his return from Babylon in 707 B.C. Sargon formally took possession of his new city, and the images of the gods were solemnly inducted into their temples. Two years later he was assassinated, and his son Sennacherib, who succeeded him, abandoned the whole colossal enterprise and returned to live in Nineveh.

Sennacherib was probably the greatest statesman since Hammurabi, and Assyria in his time reached the pinnacle of its fame and magnificence. He selected Nineveh as the new capital and centre of the empire and set about replanning and reconstructing it on a scale which he considered compatible with its function. 'Nineveh,' he observed, 'the noble fortress, the city beloved of the goddess Ishtar, where from of old, the kings who went before, my fathers, had exercised the rule over Assyria before me, and had governed the subjects of Enlil, and yearly without interruption had received therein as an income the tribute of the princes of the four quarters of the earth; not one of them had turned his mind to consider the palace therein, the place of the royal abode, whereof the site was now too small.' Furthermore they had not 'thought to improve the appearance of the city by laying

out streets or widening the broad places, digging canals or planting orchards'.⁴ Sennacherib now set to work to remedy this state of affairs. Labour was plentiful, and it was largely war-captives who carried earth and puddled the clay for the millions of crude bricks which went into his buildings.

They are depicted in the relief-carvings of his palace—Chaldeans, Arameans, Armenians, Cilicians, Philistines, or Tyrians, labouring to raise the high platform on which the palace was to be built and to drag the huge sculptures into place. Then came the actual building, and all the resources of the empire were drawn upon to make it magnificent. 'Gold, silver, copper, red sandstone, breccia, alabaster, ivory, maple, box, mulberry, cedar, cypress, pine, olive, oak, all had their place in its ornamentation. Within was the bright enamel of glazed brick panels, ceilings whitewashed to remove the gloom and curtains draped back across elaborate silver bosses. Near the doors were colossal cows of marble and ivory bearing up the flower-like calyx on which rested the columns. Winged lions and bulls were cast in bronze for the same purpose and the cedar columns above them were encased in copper. Thus "The Palace without a Rival" was created, the centre of the civilized world.'¹⁴

Sennacherib's civic sense now prompted him to lay out spacious parks and orchards both inside and outside the city walls. To the east, a garden and artificial swamp was to accommodate the strange assembly of hitherto unknown animals, flowers and trees which he brought back from his campaigns in distant lands. Not content with the muddy and inadequate water of the Tigris he travelled northwards in search of a clean spring. This he found where the Gomel river issues forth from a mountain gorge at Bavian. He built fifty miles of paved canal to bring the water to Nineveh, collecting other streams as he went, and 'spanning deep valleys on aqueducts of white stone'. High on the face of the rock at its source, he carved colossal images of the gods and the record of his accomplishments.²⁰

Yet before Sennacherib could settle down to the peaceful pursuits of building and economic planning, like Sargon before him he found himself compelled to reconquer the rebellious Assyrian empire. Early in his reign he found himself called upon to subdue the cities of the Cilician plain and the Greek

colonies on the coasts of Asia Minor. Once again his plundering armies withdrew, leaving behind submissive vassals, and at Tarsus he built a Babylonian model-city astride the river Cydnus, from which a provincial governor might administer his authority over the tribes of Taurus. Once more the cities of Syria and Phoenicia, Judah and Israel heard the thunder of the Assyrian war-machines battering their walls, and hurriedly renewed their allegiance. To the siege of Jerusalem he left his principal general or *rab-shakeh*, and in the Book of Kings there is a vivid description of King Hezekiah's attempts at negotiation with him when he invested the city. "What confidence is this wherein thou trusteth?" shouted the general from the foot of the wall. "Thou sayest (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war! Now on whom dost thou trust that thou rebellest against me? Now, behold thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it; so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him. . . . Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Samaria, have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?"

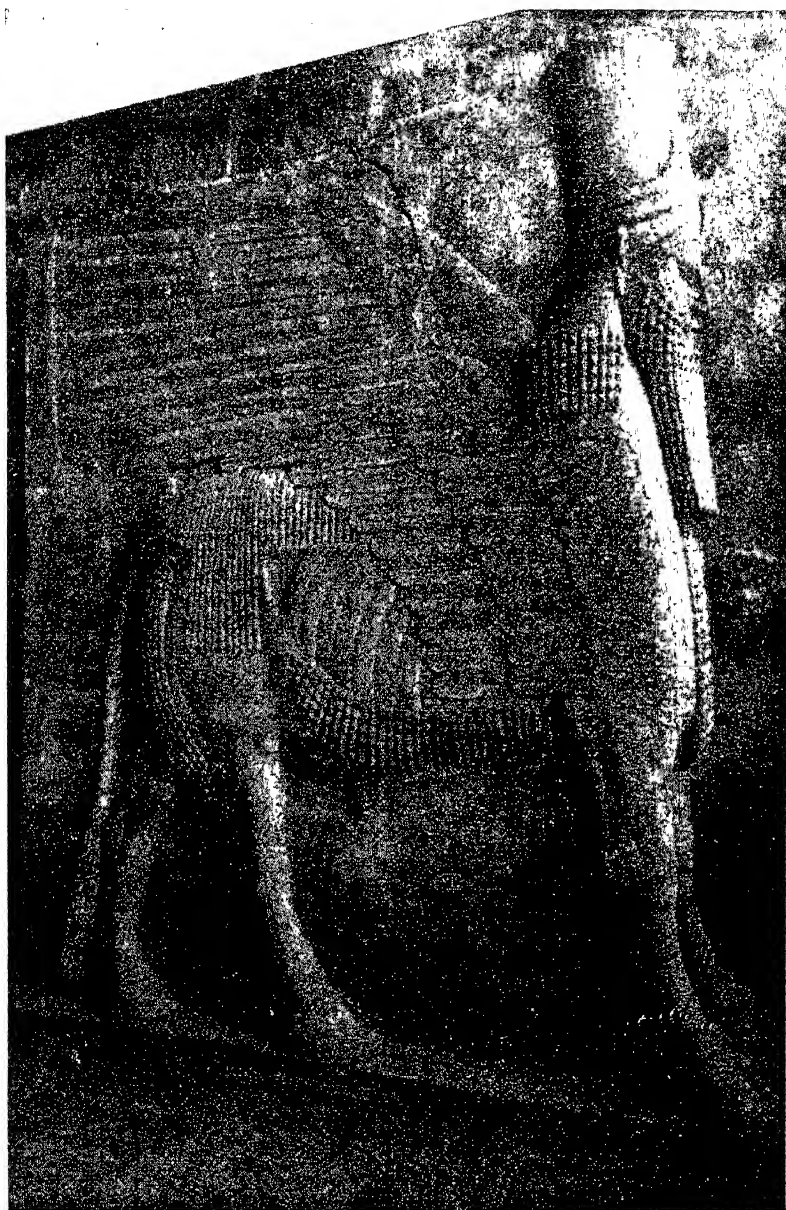
This speech was interrupted in the middle by Hezekiah's envoy, who implored the *rab-shakeh* to speak Aramaic and not to 'talk in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that are upon the wall'. Yet the prophet Isaiah, who had prompted the king to resist the Assyrians, was justified in the end, for Sennacherib's troops never entered the gates of Jerusalem. They were prevented from invading Egypt by a pestilence which assailed them from the marshes of the Delta. 'The angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four-score and five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.' Sennacherib himself was sent hurrying back to Iraq by a rumour that the troublesome Chaldeans had again invaded Babylonia. He contrived to save Babylon itself, where he now established his own son Ashur-nadin-shum as king. But he evidently again failed to scotch Merodach-baladan

himself, for six years later, in 693 B.C., we find him compelled to organize an elaborate expedition against the cities of the Elamites west of the Persian Gulf, where the veteran Sealander had taken refuge. This time his line of approach was remarkable. He had a fleet of great ships built 'on the Phoenician model' somewhere near Jerablus on the upper Euphrates, and manned by Sidonian sailors. The flotilla sailed down the river to the gulf and carried an army across to the Elamite coast. The Chaldeans were defeated and their cities ravaged. Barge-loads of prisoners were brought back to Babylon, where the king was waiting, not apparently having trusted himself to the inhospitable waters of the gulf. Mero-dach-baladan is not heard of again after this.

There was one last revolt in Babylonia two years later, but this time Sennacherib, exasperated by the necessity for continually wasting troops on what should have been an integral part of Assyria, decided to take drastic measures. In one of the panels carved in the cliff-face at Bavian there is an inscription which relates in detail how he razed the city of Babylon to the ground, and even diverted one of the principal irrigation canals so that its waters washed over the ruins. Once again the gesture of an Assyrian king brought about a stupendous piece of human folly, and the fruit of centuries of Babylonian culture was buried beneath a layer of Mesopotamian mud.

Sennacherib's end came in 681 B.C., and there is only the Biblical tradition to suggest how he died. It says: 'And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.'

Our detailed knowledge of the life and times of Sennacherib is largely due to Layard's discovery in his palace at Nineveh of the state library, which consisted of several thousand minutely inscribed clay tablets. One thing which they reveal is the remarkably efficient administration of the empire, centring largely around the king's 'Colonial Office', where many of these tablets had their origin. Sennacherib 'maintained a system of royal messengers, and in each of the more important places on the main roads he appointed an official to attend to the transmission of all royal business. In this



Iraq Museum

An Assyrian winged bull, found in the Nergal Gate at Nineveh by Layard. It was later thought to have been destroyed, but reappeared during a heavy rain-storm in April 1941.



Sheikhs of the Shammar tribe among the ruins of Hatra

manner all clay-tablet letters or produce and merchandise belonging to the royal house were sure of being forwarded. This organization formed the beginnings of a system which continued for many centuries in the Orient. In this way the emperor received the letters and reports of some sixty governors over districts and provinces, besides many subject kings who were sometimes allowed to continue their rule under Assyrian control. We even have several clay-tablet letters dispatched by Sennacherib himself when he was crown prince, and addressed to his royal father Sargon.' ¹⁴

One factor which helped to make the Assyrian army the most terrible war-machine of the ancient world was the use of iron. The new metal had been introduced by the Hittites of Anatolia and almost immediately adopted by the Assyrian armourers. 'The bulk of the Assyrian army was composed of archers, supported by heavy-armed spearmen and shield-bearers. Besides these, the famous horsemen and chariotry of Nineveh became the scourge of the East. . . . Besides their iron weapons and their war-machines the Assyrian soldiers displayed a certain inborn ferocity which held all western Asia in abject terror before the thundering squadrons of the Ninevites. Wherever the terrible Assyrian armies swept through the land, they left a trail of ruin and desolation behind. . . . Through clouds of dust rising along all the main roads of the Empire, the men of the subject kingdoms beheld great herds of cattle, horses and asses, flocks of goats and sheep and long lines of camels loaded with gold and silver, the wealth of the conquered, converging upon the palace at Nineveh.' ¹⁴

This palace, with all its resulting splendour, was now inherited by Esarhaddon. The new king's temperament differed greatly from that of his father. By adopting a long-term policy of conciliation and careful diplomacy he attained results which would have involved Sennacherib in the loss of innumerable lives. Almost the first step he took was to rebuild the city of Babylon, and the consequent gratitude and goodwill of the Babylonians relieved him of the necessity of himself defending their country against the avarice of Elam and the importunities of the Chaldeans, now led by a son of

Merodach-baladan. Actually, in the sphere of conquest Esarhaddon's ambitions lay further afield. His predecessors had all failed to invade Egypt, and on this venture he had now set his heart. First of all, however, he found it necessary to suppress an insurrection of the Phœnician cities. Sidon was easily captured and obliterated, and the booty which his scribes carefully listed included 'costly woods, tapestries and dress-stuffs'. The procession in which it was carried back to Nineveh was headed by a Sidonian nobleman, around whose neck was suspended the severed head of his late king. Yet Esarhaddon's siege of Tyre was evidently less successful. Admittedly on the sculptured record of this campaign a king of Tyre is depicted on his knees with a ring through his lips, but in the inscription which accompanies the pictures all mention of the city is directly omitted. In the same way his first attack on Egypt in 674 B.C. was for some reason unsuccessful, and it was not until three years later that he succeeded in reaching Memphis. The immemorial city of the Pharaohs fell after an almost fanatically fierce defence, and was given to the sword.

Sirhakah, the Ethiopian king of Egypt, fled to Thebes, whither the Assyrians did not follow him, but his gods were carried in triumph to Assyria and the pride of the Egyptian people was humbled in the dust. On his return through Syria, Esarhaddon paused at the famous defile called the 'Dog River', where for three thousand years every conqueror had carved upon the rocks some record of his triumph, and here he had himself depicted with a malignantly caricatured Egyptian king licking the hem of his garment.

Like so many other Assyrian triumphs, this one was short-lived. No sooner was Esarhaddon's back turned than Sirhakah came down from Upper Egypt and recaptured Memphis, massacring the Assyrian garrison. Esarhaddon's fury was terrible, but while preparing to return to Egypt he was taken ill and died.

Esarhaddon was succeeded by his son Ashur-bani-pal, whom the Greeks called Sardanapallos, and who is also referred to in the Bible as Asnapper. The palace which he built at Nineveh was excavated in 1853 by Sir Henry Layard's successor, Hormuzd Rassam, who in addition to the marvellous

'Lion-hunt' sculptures now in the British Museum unearthed another royal library.¹⁸ Ashur-bani-pal's reign is consequently another well-documented fragment of Assyrian history. His duty was to punish the rebellious Egyptians, and, after one abortive expedition, whose success was prevented by a great storm, he not only succeeded in recapturing Memphis, but took a Phoenician flotilla up the Nile to Luxor and occupied the holy city of Thebes. His father's policy of clemency to the conquered, which he adhered to in the case of Thebes, now proved misguided, and the garrisons which he left inadequate. Seven years later he was compelled to undertake a third conquest of Egypt, and to treat the city of Thebes as Sennacherib had treated Babylon. The great stone temples of the Egyptians were left standing, but a prodigious loot of gold, silver, statues and even sculptured obelisks was carried off to Nineveh, and the city itself was sacked. Excavators have quite recently discovered charred ruins of houses burnt to the ground on this occasion, and in one of them the helmet of an Assyrian soldier.

The much larger army of occupation which Ashur-bani-pal was now compelled to leave in Egypt proved a terrible drain on Assyria, both in men and war-supplies. And when this became apparent, the usual uprising of south Iraq and Elam at once took place. The rebellion followed the precedent of those in previous reigns with almost tedious similarity, a familiar feature being the presence among the Elamite forces of a contingent of Chaldeans under a grandson of Merodach-baladan. The only remarkable aspect of the whole affair was that it was led by Shamash-shum-ukim, Ashur-bani-pal's own brother, who had been made governor of Babylon. Its suppression was achieved at the cost of an appalling number of casualties among the Assyrian troops, and the strain which it put upon the imperial reserves created a central weakness from which Nineveh never completely recovered. Even Ashur-bani-pal's fertile imagination was taxed to invent adequate tortures and humiliations for the insurgent leaders who survived his punitive campaign. Certain Arab chieftains, 'dwellers in the tents of Kedar', who had joined in the revolt, were treated literally like dogs, being chained in kennels before the palace door. Others were sold in the slave-markets

of Nineveh for a few shillings. Harnessed to the king's chariot, when he returned to the capital, were the presumptuous princes of Elam. His brother was not with them, only because he had committed himself to the flames of his own palace. Babylonia and Elam were full of smoking ruins, in which 'the voice of men, the tread of cattle and the sound of happy music were no more heard'.

Earlier in Ashur-bani-pal's reign an envoy had arrived at an Assyrian frontier-post, from Gyges, King of Lydia, a country which had only now begun to take the place of Phrygia as the leading power in north-western Anatolia. 'Who, then, art thou,' the Lydian was asked, 'from whose country no courier has yet made his way?' Being unable to reply, except by signs, he was then taken to Nineveh, where after much difficulty an interpreter was procured and he was able to deliver Gyges' message. It was an appeal to Assyria to assist him in beating off the raids of Kimmerian tribesmen who were threatening the safety of his kingdom. Ashur-bani-pal, who was in no position to spare troops, agreed instead to make a special prayer to Ishtar on Gyges' behalf, and sure enough the Lydians almost simultaneously scored a great victory. Fortified by this unexpected success, they then treacherously sought an alliance with other states against Assyria, and after Ashur-bani-pal returned from Elam they even began to threaten his northern frontiers. The king thereupon resorted again to the expedient of praying to Ishtar, and Gyges was defeated and killed by his old enemies the Kimmerians. This was Ashur-bani-pal's last and easiest military triumph. From now onwards the records of his reign lose conviction, for the stability of the state was no longer equal to the strain which his conquests had put upon it, and the empire had begun to totter. By the time of his death the shadows of its doom were rapidly lengthening. Nevertheless his reign had been a remarkable one, and his name was immortalized by the legacy which he had unconsciously bequeathed to posterity in his library at Nineveh. It is clear that he had strangely combined the attributes of a ruthless and brutal general with a taste for antiquarian research. Acting on his instructions his scribes had collected and transcribed all the old Sumerian traditions and rituals extant in his day, and it is to their industry, as we have already seen,

that the modern world owes such literary treasures as the epic of Gilgamesh and the story of the Deluge.*

Meanwhile, in Armenia and northern Persia, the Medes and lawless Kimmerians were 'gathering like vultures awaiting the last moments of their victim'. The actual end of Nineveh is naturally less well recorded than the deeds of its heroes, but it is fairly certain that the Greek story of how, when the Medes attacked, 'Sardanapallos' perished in the flames of his palace, is a confusion with the legend of his brother's death at Babylon. There are records of two ephemeral successors to Ashur-bani-pal, and it was probably the second of these who perished in the ruins of Nineveh. By 612 B.C. the whole empire was in revolt, and an Egyptian army was hurrying across Syria in the hope of being in at the death. One tradition tells how the converging hosts arrived before the walls of the city, and, creating a great flood by diverting the Khosr river, were able to bring up their siege-engines on gigantic rafts. In any case, the outer rampart, Bad-garnerukhubukhkha, 'the wall that terrifies the foe', and the inner fortification, Bad-imgalbi-galukurra-shushu, 'the wall whose splendour overthrows the enemy', were in turn breached and the city was completely destroyed. It was never rebuilt. Many years afterwards, when a remnant of the inhabitants returned, they founded a new city on the opposite bank of the Tigris, and called it Mespila or Mosul. The modern village surrounding the little shrine of the prophet Jonah stands upon the ruins of one of king Esarhaddon's palaces, and is probably the most populous settlement which has existed among the mounds of Nineveh from that day to this. And so the lugubrious prophecies of a contemporary Hebrew poet were fulfilled. 'He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation and dry like the wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the chapters thereof; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds, for he hath laid bare the cedar wood. This is the joyous city that said, I am, there is none else beside me; how is she

* See pp. 21 and 18.

become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in. Every-one that passeth her shall hiss and wag his hand.'

Soon after the death of Ashur-bani-pal, when little opposition was to be expected from Assyria, the Sealanders had at last succeeded in seizing Babylonia, and a Chaldean called Nabopolassar had made himself king. He founded a Chaldean dynasty in south Iraq, which lasted for seventy years after the fall of Nineveh and temporarily revived the glories of Babylon. With the invading Medes for the moment halted in Assyria, the new Babylonian kings took their turn at conquest in the west, and rapidly created what is usually known as the Neo-Babylonian empire.

Early in the year 622 B.C. we have seen an Egyptian army hurrying to claim its share of the spoils of Nineveh. Had not its leader, Pharaoh Necho, paused like so many of his predecessors at the Dog River to record his passage on the much-sculptured rocks, it would perhaps have arrived in time. As it was, the Egyptians found themselves opposed on the ancient battlefield of Megiddo by Josiah, king of Judah, and by the time they had succeeded in brushing aside the Hebrew army, it was too late. Furthermore they almost at once found themselves confronted by a more determined foe than Josiah. This was Nebuchadnezzar, the energetic son of Nabopolassar, who had ascended the Euphrates, intent upon forcibly adopting the Assyrian dependencies in Syria. A battle took place at Carchemish, and the motley host of Egyptians, Nubians and unreliable Greek mercenaries which Necho had collected fled in confusion. Nebuchadnezzar swept through the Levant, and only paused on the frontiers of Egypt, when he received news of the death of his father and his own inheritance of the throne of Babylonia.

The period of forty years during which Nebuchadnezzar ruled over Babylon constituted one of the most brilliant reigns in human history. In spite of the long and successful wars which he waged, the inscriptions which he has left record only building and reconstruction, while stamped bricks found by archaeologists all over southern Iraq have revealed that he generously rebuilt temples and palaces in every city of any importance in the country. But most of all he devoted his

energies to the enlargement and beautification of Babylon itself,¹⁹ which had suffered so severely at the hands of successive conquerors. 'Copying much from Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar was able to surpass his Assyrian predecessors in the splendour of the great buildings which he now erected. In the large temple quarter in the south of the city, he rebuilt the temples of the long-revered Babylonian divinities. Leading from these to the palace, he laid out a festival avenue which passed through an imposing gateway called the "Ishtar Gate", for it was dedicated to this goddess. Behind it lay the vast imperial palace and the offices of government, while high over all towered the temple-mount, which rose by the Marduk Temple, a veritable Tower of Babel. Masses of rich tropical verdure, rising in terrace upon terrace, forming a lofty garden, crowned the roof of the imperial palace and, overlooking the Ishtar gate, enhanced the brightness of its colours. Here in the cool shade of palms and ferns, inviting to luxurious ease, the great king might enjoy an idle hour with the ladies of his court, and look down upon the splendours of his city. These roof-gardens of Nebuchadnezzar's palace were the mysterious Hanging Gardens of Babylon, whose fame spread far into the West, until they were numbered by the Greeks among the Seven Wonders of the World. . . . For the first time Babylonia saw a very large city. It was immensely extended by Nebuchadnezzar, and enormous fortified walls were built to protect it.'¹⁴

The outermost fortification, which was called the Median Wall, ran approximately north-south, clean across Mesopotamia, from the modern Beled on the Tigris to Sippar, which was then on the Euphrates.²¹ The inner and outer city walls, Imgur-bel and Nimitti-bel, and the brick-sided moat are all described in inscriptions which have survived, and we have the king's own account of how he rebuilt the temples, embellishing them with gold where before there had been silver. He mentions how, in laying their foundations, he 'began again at the earth's surface', and this possibly explains the extremely deep walls found by the German excavators, penetrating the more ancient ruins, practically to the clean earth beneath.

The Chaldeans appear to have adopted and greatly contributed to the older Babylonian culture. Arts and industries

were highly developed, religion and literature were treated with equal seriousness, and great strides were made in the science of astronomy, which was just beginning to emerge from the realm of astrological superstition.

In spite of all this peaceful and constructive activity at home in Babylonia, Nebuchadnezzar was by no means lacking in military prowess. When, in spite of the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah, Judah revolted against him, he besieged and took Jerusalem, carrying off to Iraq 'seven thousand armed men and a thousand workers in iron', as well as the king Jehoiachin himself. As though this were not enough, a few years later Judah again refused tribute, its new king, Zedekiah, relying on help from Egypt, the 'bruised reed' of Sennacherib's time. Once more Egyptian help arrived too late to save Jerusalem. The Holy City was destroyed, the temple burnt and all the precious metal taken to Babylon. This time about 40,000 Jews were carried away captive into Iraq, to 'weep by the waters of Babylon'. Hezekiah, the king, saw his sons slain before his eyes and was himself blinded.

This last revolt of Judah had been partly instigated by the Phoenicians, so Nebuchadnezzar next set himself to besiege Tyre. The city, which was on an island only approachable by boat, had now been made almost impregnable, and it took Nebuchadnezzar nearly thirteen years to bring about its submission. Even then he was forced to compromise. The Phoenicians agreed to pay tribute, but like Ashur-bani-pal he never succeeded in plundering the city.

It is probable that towards the end of his life Nebuchadnezzar was planning an invasion of Egypt, but if this was so his death prevented it, for there is no record of such an event having taken place. His three immediate successors were undistinguished and short-lived, and with the third, the dynasty of Nabopolassar expired. The peace-loving priests of Babylon thereupon selected a king after their own hearts, 'the pious and peaceful archaeologist and amateur of ancient records, Nabonidus, who was probably a wealthy merchant'.

Nabonidus carried on the building tradition of Nebuchadnezzar, and at the same time developed the hobby of studying history in relation to the 'foundation-deposits' of early temple builders which his labours brought to light. At Sippar, for instance, while he was rebuilding the great temple of Shamash

the Sun-god, he discovered far beneath the ground the original foundation-records of the Akkadian Naram-sin, who had first consecrated a shrine there two thousand years before. He celebrated the discovery like an Assyrian king triumphing after a victory and consecrated 5,000 cedar trees to the adornment of his own building.

But while Nabonidus basked in the retrospective twilight of his reign, the sands of Babylonian destiny were running low. To his son, Belshazzar, he had long ago assigned all the practical side of administering the empire, and it was he who was to see the 'writing on the wall'.

CHAPTER IV

ACHAEMENIAN PERSIANS

539-330 B.C.

Cyrus	558-28	Xerxes I	485-65
Founded first Persian empire, annexed Iraq		Salamis and Plataea	
Cambyses	528-1	Artaxerxes I	465-25
Extended the empire from Mediterranean to the Oxus		Xerxes II	425-4
Smerdes	521	Darius II	424-04
		Artaxerxes II	404-359
Darius I	521-485	Artaxerxes III	359-38
'Ionian revolt.' Marathon. Xenophon's <i>Anabasis</i>		Arses	338-6
		Darius III	336-30
		Conquered by Alexander the Great	

THE appearance of the Medes in northern Iraq, with the awful obliteration of Nineveh, was not only the abrupt end of a great empire; it was a symptom of a new tendency in the fortunes of the river-country. Up till now it had been governed by its own people, and there is every reason for thinking that its own people were evolved, without any very great deviation, from the earliest prehistoric settlers of the fourth and fifth millennia B.C. True, it had periodically been affected by the migratory disturbances of the eastern world. A variety of strange peoples from neighbouring lands had successively descended into the plain from the mountains or appeared out of the desert, and sometimes temporarily succeeded in dominating its inhabitants. Semitic Akkadians and Assyrians from the west, covetous Elamites from Iran and Aryan Kassites from the countries in the north had each in turn aspired to control the principal states of Mesopotamia. But each in turn found themselves able to contribute little to the well-conceived civic heritage of the original inhabitants, and were content in the end to settle down side by side with them, unconsciously assimilating themselves, until they were gradually absorbed into an almost homogeneous nationality.

But with the destruction of Nineveh and the fall, only seventy years later, of Babylon, the continuity of Iraqi history was broken; and the land which had by now become a political

as well as a geographical entity degenerated to the state of a province annexed to the domain of some foreign power.

Of the first four great eastern monarchies which counted the land of Iraq amongst their possessions, three were centred in the mountain country which we now call Persia or Iran. Since, then, we have up till now considered Persia and Central Asia rather vaguely as the 'Iranian highlands' from which families of prematurely cultured people issued into the plain in the remoteness of prehistory, or as the country of the Elamites whose spasmodic contacts with Babylonia and Assyria had only occasionally to be noted, we should now perhaps study more carefully the contemporary map of the great plateau and its surrounding mountains.

Its south-western edge is clearly defined by a formidable range of mountains, whose winter snow becomes easily visible on a clear day a few miles out from Baghdad. This range, or rather, succession of ranges, stretches from the head of the Persian Gulf almost to Lake Van, parallel to the courses of the two rivers, that is, from south-east to north-west. Beyond this barrier we now see, in the north, Media roughly aligned with the province of Assyria, and with its traditional capital at Ecbatana; aligned with Babylonia is Susiana, centred around Susa, the most ancient Persian capital of all. Persis, flanking the Persian Gulf, is separated by a vast central desert from Parthia, which lies east of Media and the Caspian Sea. If we add to these Bactria, which almost equates to the northern provinces of modern Afghanistan, reaching northwards to the Oxus, and finally the mountain countries west of the Indus, we shall have outlined as much of the Middle East as is pertinent to the pre-Christian history of Iraq and, for that matter, shall have reached the eastern frontiers of the world as known in those days.

During the later years of the seventh century B.C. a new power had been growing in this land beyond the mountain barrier, and showed signs of being about to issue through its western defiles into the plain. The first arrivals were the Medes, and we have already, in the last chapter, seen the Semitic plain-dwellers recoil from their impact. They easily possessed themselves of Assyria, and Babylon accepted an alliance which practically amounted to vassalage. But in the meanwhile amongst their own mountains the seat of

government had shifted southwards. Cyrus, a true Persian from the region of Persepolis, seems to have wrested the throne from the Median dynasty while its armies were engaged in the west, and to have established his kingdom with Susa as capital. Taking the tide of conquest at its flood, his personal ambition stimulated his countrymen to further victories, and he was the first to visualize an Iranian Empire.

Needless to say, one of Cyrus' first objectives in Iraq was the complete subjugation of the Babylonian state and the annexation of its rich territories. For this purpose he marched against the capital. It had already become evident that the king's pride and personal magnificence were well up to the standard of oriental conquerors, and this was now proved by an episode which took place while his armies were approaching Babylon. The story is told by Herodotus, and is so characteristic that it may be recounted here in his own words.

'When Cyrus reached this stream'—the Gyndes, probably the Diyala—'which could only be crossed in boats, one of the sacred white horses accompanying his march, full of spirit and high mettle, walked into the water and tried to cross by himself; but the current seized him, carried him along with it, and drowned him in its depths. Cyrus, enraged at the insolence of the river, threatened so to break its strength that in future even women should cross it easily without wetting their knees. Accordingly he put off for the time his attack on Babylon, and, dividing his army into two parts, he marked out by ropes one hundred and eighty trenches on each side of the Gyndes, leading off from it in all directions, and setting his army to dig, some on one side of the river, some on the other, he accomplished his threat by the aid of so great a number of hands, but not without losing thereby the whole of the summer season.'⁹

Herodotus tells us that, after dispersing the Gyndes, Cyrus marched on towards Babylon and encountered the armies of Nabonidus (presumably under the command of Belshazzar) at Opis. Herodotus has previously mentioned that 'the Tigris after receiving the Gyndes flows on by the city of Opis and discharges its waters into the Erythraean Sea'; so that the battle which followed was probably fought somewhere near what was later the site of Seleucia-Ctesiphon. In any case the Babylonian army was defeated, and withdrew within the

defences of Babylon. After this there are several different versions of the actual fall of the city. According to Cyrus himself the Babylonian god Marduk had throughout strongly approved of the whole expedition. 'He ordered him to betake himself to his city of Babylon, made him take the way to Babylon, going as a friend by his side, without a struggle or combat allowed him to enter Babylon, his city. . . . The whole of the people of Babylon, the whole of Sumer and Akkad, the great men and the governors of cities bowed under him, kissed his feet, were delighted with his sovereignty, their faces glowed.'*

Herodotus and Xenophon between them give us a much more plausible and interesting account of how the city was taken. The Babylonians were apparently given great confidence in their ability to withstand a siege by the fact that they had stored within the city sufficient provisions to last them twenty years. But after a careful survey of the fortifications Cyrus formed a quite different plan. According to Xenophon, he set his army to dig a great trench around the city, outside the walls, from the point where the river entered in the north to where it flowed out in the south. He constructed towers at intervals, to give the impression that this was done for the purpose of effectively investing the city. He then waited for a night when there was heavy feasting in the town in celebration of some religious festival, and while the Babylonians, according to the Biblical tradition, watched the 'writing on the wall', he successfully diverted the Euphrates into the trench and led his army into the city along the dry river-bed. Xenophon²² records Cyrus' speech of exhortation to his troops, and then continues: 'As soon as these words were spoken they went forward; and of those that met them some were struck down and killed, some fled and some raised a shout. They that were with Cyrus joined in the shout with them, as if they were revellers themselves, and, marching on the shortest way that they could, arrived at the palace. Those who were appointed to attack the guards, fell upon them as they were drinking at a large fire and dealt with them as with enemies.' Those in the palace, hearing the noise, rushed out, and were met by armed Persians who, entering, seized and slew the king himself. After this the success of

* From a contemporary inscription.

the whole plan was assured, though the confusion in the city must have been considerable. 'Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts, long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had chanced, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and revelling until they learnt the capture but too certainly.'⁹ All this, incidentally, gives point to the curious words used in the Bible by the prophet Jeremiah: 'One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end.' (Jer. li. 31.)

Herodotus' account varies only slightly from that of Xenophon. He does not mention the trench, but suggests that, leaving the main part of his army concentrated at the points where the Euphrates entered and left the city, Cyrus withdrew the remainder upstream to a point where he had no difficulty in breaking down the eastern bund and diverting the river into what is now called the Aqar Quf depression. This served the same purpose of leaving the river-bed dry.

So the second great capital city of Mesopotamia had fallen, and this was the end of Babylonian greatness. Alexander the Great was to revive it for a short while, mainly out of respect for its illustrious past, but his successors built themselves new capitals on the banks of the Tigris and the Orontes and the temples and palaces of Babylon soon crumbled to the depressing heap which we see today. Iraq, meanwhile, had for the first time become the province of a foreign empire.

The extension of Cyrus' conquests to the west and the north have no place in this story, for Mesopotamia, once it had fallen under the domination of Persia, showed little interest in and remained unaffected by the imperial triumphs of its masters in other parts of the world. Cyrus met his death in Media while endeavouring to quell a revolt of the barbaric Scythian element which had never been effectively reconciled to his dynasty. He was succeeded by his son, Cambyses, who succeeded in extending his possessions by subjugating Syria and Egypt: and soon, for the first time in history, the whole East, from the Black Sea to the Nile and from the Mediterranean to the Oxus, was united in a single empire.

This first great eastern empire was in several ways remarkable. The Achaemenian Persians, as Cyrus' people were

called, came, in the more scientific sense, of very pure Aryan stock, in some ways more akin to the West than the East. They were what Hogarth calls 'highlanders of unimpaired vigour, settled agricultural life, long-established social cohesion and religious conceptions, whose quick intelligence rapidly mastered imperial organization'.²³ It is for this reason less surprising when, a little later, we find for instance an inter-provincial postal service passing over carefully-kept state roads with a celerity and regularity which astounded Herodotus. 'Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers.' The most important of these roads was the famous Royal Road from Sardis to Susa, which passed through the length of Iraq to the east of the Tigris. It is interesting to note that for a long stretch between Kirkuk and Erbil, the modern motor road takes precisely the same line, running a little to the west, and as one passes along it one sees a string of mounds representing ancient villages and towns, usually situated at points where the Royal Road crossed a stream or a *wadi*.

This sort of civic amenity, combined with evidence which we still have of other most advanced and up-to-date political expedients in the administration of the provinces, suggests that the Persian imperial principle was in advance of anything before, with the possible exception of Egypt. It was at this time for instance that the Jewish exiles were enabled to return to Judea, and the fact that a great many did not avail themselves of the opportunity throws an interesting side-light on the prosperity of the country. Names mentioned in contract tablets found at Nippur give one to infer that late in the fifth century many Hebrews were still profitably 'weeping by the waters of Babylon'.

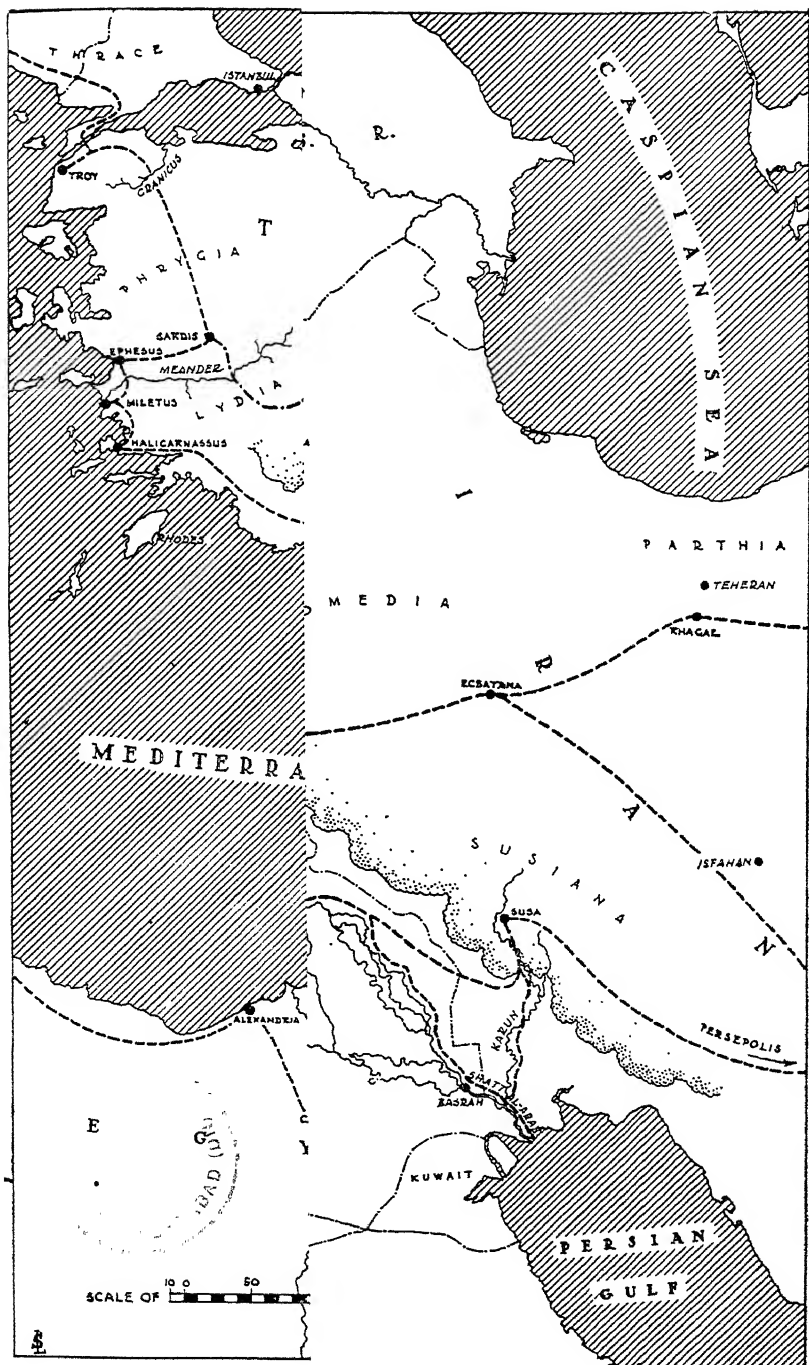
The climax of Achaemenian prosperity came in the time of Darius I, who succeeded in adding the rich Greek cities of the Asian littoral and the long line of settlements along the Balkan coasts of the Aegean and Black Seas to his possessions. After this the reaction set in. The first symptom was an episode more familiar in Greek history under the name of the Ionian Revolt. The Ionian cities were the Greek colonies along the Aegean coast of what is now western Turkey, and it started with the insubordination of Miletus, one of the richest of these. Next, greatly daring, some Greeks burnt

the 'lower town' beneath the great fortress of Sardis, capital of the Lydian province, while an obscure despot from the Bosphorus seized the islands of Imbros and Lemnos. Soon it had spread from the Black Sea to Cyprus, and Darius became dangerously incensed.

A succession of vast armadas were sent to punish the temerity of the Greeks, and if possible to add the Greek mainland to the Empire. To the consternation of the Persian kings, these were met with formidable resistance. The first barely succeeded in reaching Macedonia, while the second, after some successes amongst the Aegean islands, encountered a humiliating defeat at the hands of a comparatively small Athenian army at Marathon. The story of this battle and those of Salamis and Plataea where, ten years later, after Xerxes had succeeded Darius, a Persian navy and army were completely routed by the Greeks, cannot by any stretch of imagination be considered part of the history of Iraq. In any case, they feature almost too prominently in school classics.

Apart from the immediate results, such as a loss of all the Persian holdings in the Balkans, the indirect effects of these three great disasters were far-reaching. The Greeks now realized their fighting power, and the mystery of the Orient was largely dissipated. The discomfiture of the Persians 'exalted the spirit of Europe, while it depraved the courage and sapped the self-reliance of Asia'. Meanwhile, in the East itself, another epic of military fortitude had implemented the increasing prestige of Europeans. Ten thousand heavy-armed Greeks, mostly Spartans, had marched undefeated clean across western Asia. These were the mercenary auxiliaries of a large native force led by a younger Cyrus, satrap of west-central Anatolia, against his half-brother, the second Artaxerxes. Our detailed knowledge of their advance into Iraq and their subsequent amazing return to the Black Sea we owe to Xenophon, who accompanied them first as a private individual and later as their leader.²⁴

I propose to follow this campaign with some care, not so much because of its dramatic quality, but for two other reasons. First because Xenophon's carefully recorded itinerary has formed the basis of so much speculation about the historical geography, and even the ethnology of Iraq and its neighbouring countries, and, secondly, because this was the first of a



long succession of Western armies which we shall watch marching either down the Euphrates or along the Tigris to attack Babylon, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, or whatever city happens at the moment to be the capital of Iraq. One ancient writer speaks of the springtime 'when kings go forth to war'. For the next five hundred years one could almost equally well say 'when kings go up against Mesopotamia'.

Cyrus' expedition starts from Sardis, but it is not until he reaches the famous pass, called the Cilician Gate, leading down from the Anatolian plateau into the seaward plain of Cilicia, that he strikes what is for most people more familiar ground geographically. At the risk of disappointing some habitual travellers on the Taurus Express, it becomes necessary at this point to observe that the impressive cleft in the mountains which is visible when the train stops at a small mountain halt called Karapinar is not in fact the authentic Cilician Gate. The Kulak Boghaz, as the Turks call it, which is even more spectacular, is some distance farther west. Cyrus' army must have taken the road winding through the gorge which Xenophon describes as 'just broad enough for a chariot to pass, if disencumbered of fallen rocks'. Since from this point its sides rise almost vertically several thousand feet to the jagged walls of a ruined castle, it may well be considered one of the most remarkable mountain passes in the world.

Descending into the wide, fertile plain of Cilicia, Cyrus came to Tarsus, probably its oldest city. Tarsus was famous for its goat-hair cloth which, in fact, the Romans later called *cilicium*. This was used for making tents (the Bedouin *buyut esh shaar*, houses of hair) and one is reminded that Saul of Tarsus was a tent-maker as well as a 'citizen of no mean city'.

In Tarsus, Cyrus found Epyaxa, the queen of Cilicia, presumably an Armenian. An extraordinary, amorous passage with this lady, whose husband had withdrawn his modest army to a neighbouring castle, enabled him to appease the dissatisfaction of his soldiers by making up three months' arrears of pay. It also delayed him at least three weeks.

Cilicia is bounded on three sides by high mountains and on the fourth side by the sea. After reaching Tarsus on the Royal Road, which Cyrus had so far been following, there are two alternative ways of passing into north Syria. The first of these is used by the main line of the modern railway.

It crosses the range called Anti-Taurus in a southerly direction, using a pass with which the name of a celebrated Turkish general, Fevzi Pasha, is now associated. The other creeps along the coast between sea and cliffs, passing through what has always been known as the Syrian Gate, and then, turning inland, crosses the Amanus Mountains in the direction of Antioch and Aleppo. Cyrus took the second of these, and approaching the Syrian Gate, Xenophon mentions the town of Issus where, a hundred years later, Alexander the Great was to fight such a prodigious battle. Beyond Issus, the mountains draw down close to the sea, and there is a Saracenic castle called Markaz. The rocks advance from the castle to the water's edge, leaving a narrow passage through which the Turks have built a railway line. It runs in a deep cutting, and above it tower the ruins of some sort of monumental structure, perhaps the authentic 'Gate'. Today it is known as Jonah's Pillars or Sakal Tutan—'beard-catcher'—a Turkish expression for a narrow pass.

Beyond 'the Gates', Xenophon mentions Myriandus, 'a city near the sea', inhabited by Phoenicians. This place was a public mart, 'and many vessels lay at anchor there'. Myriandus no longer exists, but cannot have been far from the town founded by Alexander after Issus and called Alexandretta. This charming little port in perhaps the remotest recess of the east Mediterranean coast gives its name to the so-called 'Sanjak', which passed from French into Turkish hands just before the present war.

After Myriandus, there is an extraordinary lapse of interest in Xenophon's account. The army merely 'proceeds' four days' march (about sixty miles). This is a little disconcerting because of his failure to notice a particularly interesting piece of country. Leaving the sea he would, for instance, have crossed the Amanus range by the famous Beilan Pass, where today rich folk have their summer villas. At the summit he would have been faced with a fine panorama of the Antioch plain, with its innumerable ancient mounds, and the reedy wilderness of the great Amq marsh in the foreground, abounding in wild duck and pig. The most likely explanation of this lapse found by his commentators is some sort of 'sickness or despondency', for, presumably, even a diarist is liable to an occasional indisposition.

In any case, the next point of interest in his narrative is well beyond Aleppo. This was the river Chalcis 'full of large, tame fish, which the Syrians looked upon as gods, and allowed no one to hurt either them or the pigeons'. This was pretty certainly the Balik, a tributary of the Euphrates, whose name in Turkish, in fact, means 'fish river'. The seventeen fish species with which it was at one time credited have greatly diminished, but at Urfa, further to the east, I visited in 1938 the famous Pool of Abraham, and found the sacred carp, mentioned by every eastern traveller from the Middle Ages onwards, still very much alive. There must be literally thousands of them now, great brutes as big as sucking-pigs, sprawling out of the water on each others' backs to gulp the corn you throw to them. Curiously enough, sacred pigeons are another amenity of the astonishingly beautiful mosque-garden which surrounds the pool. Both doves and fish were originally attributes of the goddess Ishtar, and so of her relative, the legendary Queen Semiramis.

Between the Balik and the Euphrates, Cyrus wantonly destroyed the palace and gardens of the Governor of Syria. He crossed the Euphrates at Thapsacus, the water coming up no higher than the breast, and marched down its left bank until he reached the Khabur, which he calls the Araxes. Beyond the river was Xenophon's first sight of what he describes as the Arabian desert, and a much quoted description of it ensues: 'The country', he says, 'was entirely a plain, level as the sea and full of wormwood.' He also mentions game, to which the soldiers gave chase; wild asses such as the Assyrian kings hunt in the British Museum reliefs, antelopes, bustards and even an ostrich. Horses perished of hunger and his chariots stuck in the mud. When the drivers seemed stupid in extricating them he ordered the nobles of his suite to show them how. 'Throwing off their purple cloaks, they rushed forward down an extremely steep slope, having on those rich vests which they wear, and embroidered trousers, some too with chains about their necks and bracelets, and leaping with these equipments straight into the mud, brought the wagons up quicker than anyone would have imagined.'

Finding a prosperous, but now unidentified, city on the opposite bank, Cyrus' soldiers swam over on inflated skins stuffed with straw, to obtain provisions. The next recogniz-

able stage in the journey is a rocky defile fifty miles above Ramadi, called simply 'The Gates', through which he descended into Babylonia proper. This has been used as a basis for many conflicting theories as to the wanderings of the army during the succeeding fortnight, which we need not discuss. It is enough to know that a week later, at a point on the Hillah road, somewhere near Mussayib, Cyrus encountered the forces of Artaxerxes and the battle of Cunaxa was fought, in which Cyrus lost his life, and after which the 10,000 Greeks turned their faces homewards.

The course of the battle is a very simple one to explain. The Greeks were on the right wing, clinging to the Euphrates, and were faced by a corresponding line of Persians. But, owing to the immensely superior numbers of the king's army, Cyrus' left wing was seriously outflanked. As the two armies met, Cyrus shouted to the Greek commander to bear left, but he, not wanting to leave the protection of the river, replied that 'everything would be all right'. Meanwhile Artaxerxes, finding that, although he occupied the centre of his own troops, he was nevertheless beyond Cyrus' left wing, wheeled inwards towards the river. Cyrus, catching sight of him, and unable to resist the temptation of a single combat, swerved his own guard to a diagonal attack, sprang upon the king, wounding him through the breastplate, and was himself dispatched by a tremendous blow with a spear beneath the eye. His troops, panicking, were promptly routed.

On the river side, the battle had gone very differently. Directly the Greeks broke into a run, clanking their shields and shouting, Artaxerxes' left wing turned and fled, leaving their chariots driverless. When the Greeks eventually desisted from the pursuit, the only casualties they had suffered were 'such as might happen on a race-course' due to the frightened horses, and one man on the left who was 'said to have been killed by an arrow'. They did not learn till next morning of Cyrus' death.

Now the surprising phenomenon of their retreat began, a thousand miles to the sea, without reliable guides or any previous knowledge of the generally hostile country through which they were passing. One gets some idea of their ignorance of geography from the fact that their leader, Clearchus, decides against any further attack on Artaxerxes because, he

says, 'I now understand that the Tigris, a navigable river, lies between us and the king'. A truce is therefore concluded with the satrap Tissaphernes, who has been left with a Persian army to 'see him off the premises'; but not before Tissaphernes has consented to give the ten thousand a meal. 'No one', Clearchus observes, 'would speak to Greeks of a truce without providing them with breakfast,'—a statement which Tissaphernes considers 'very reasonable'. Clearchus has already had the good sense to realize the impossibility of returning the way Cyrus had come, along the Euphrates, since their survival of the desert journey had so obviously depended upon the provisions brought with them. Accordingly, he turns eastwards towards the Tigris, with the Persians watching their progress from a safe distance.

The most generally accepted theory of the month which followed is this. Their path led north at first, skirting the marsh which lies behind the ruin known as the Aqar Quf, crossed the 'Median wall', a fortification built by Nebuchadnezzar and known to have run from Opis to Sippar, reached the Tigris near a problematical large town some way above Baghdad called Sittace, and crossed it by a bridge, presumably of boats. They then marched up the left bank to a point where the Tigris is joined by a tributary called, by Xenophon, the Phrysus, fairly certainly the modern Adhaim, and halted. 'Here was situated a large town called Opis.'

An alternative theory, placing Opis below Baghdad, at or near Seleucia, presupposes a confusion of place-names in Xenophon's mind, but gives a more logical direction to Nebuchadnezzar's fortification. This controversy is interminable, and has recently been considerably complicated by the fact that attempts to identify Opis have always been made on the assumption that it was identical with another ancient place-name, Akshak; but Akshak now seems more likely to be Khafaje, a site not occupied after 2,000 B.C.

We need only follow the Ten Thousand a few stages further. Beside the Phrysus, another appalling setback awaited them. Tissaphernes lured Clearchus and their other generals into a conference and then treacherously murdered them. Undismayed, they elected Xenophon their leader and continued their journey. Caenae and Larissa are now successively mentioned, probably the two ancient Assyrian capitals Ashur

and Nimrud, and the Greater Zab is forded. Mosul Xenophon calls Mespila, and it is a melancholy reflection that, being on the east side of the river, he must, while observing that town, have been marching without knowing it across the ruins of Nineveh. Two hundred years had apparently sufficed to eliminate all identifiable signs of Jonah's 'City of three days' journey'.

Reaching the mountains at Zakho, the army first encounters the Carduchi or Kurds, of whom Xenophon gives a brisk description: 'They were very warlike, lived among the mountains and did not obey the king.' At the curious island-city of Jazirat ibn Omar they entered what is now Turkey, and here we may perhaps leave them, pausing only to recollect what was perhaps one of the most dramatic moments in ancient history, when, as the Greeks came over a mountain ridge above the Black Sea a great cry went up of '*Thalassa! Thalassa!*' and 'the men embraced one another, and their generals and captains, with tears in their eyes'.

The stories which the remnants of the Ten Thousand brought back to Greece had a far-reaching effect. To begin with, it became evident that the virile and intelligently administered Persian Empire envisaged at the beginning of this chapter was beginning to deteriorate. This impression is confirmed by the later writer Plutarch, who included, amongst his famous biographies, a life of Artaxerxes. He stresses a new disintegrating influence in the central government, namely the power of the royal ladies at court. Amongst these Eastern powers, evidence of harem intrigue is always a prelude to decadence, and at the next stage in the decline of the Achaemenids we have a picture of unenthusiastic subjects submitting resentfully to the schemes of the satraps, and inefficient, casually collected armies, in which the mercenaries are the only genuine soldiers. The first Cyrus' state has degenerated to something more nearly resembling the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. Its collapse before 'a western conqueror commanding money of his own making and a professional army of his own people' is almost a foregone conclusion.

The climax did not, however, arrive until seventy years later. Meanwhile, the enterprise of the Achaemenids showed a dying flicker in the person of Artaxerxes. Egypt, which seceded from the Empire about the same time as Cyrus'

march, had since been a perpetual thorn in the flesh. Artaxerxes who, by the way, like any good sultan, murdered various relations to reach the throne, recovered the Nile valley mainly by the use of mercenaries.

Alexander, therefore, when he set out to tackle and overthrow the empire of Persia was not, as we have seen, quite the 'little David' which he is sometimes made out. The eastern colossus had been dwindling for nearly a century, and the Great King was no longer more than the 'titular Emperor of contumacious satraps, and the ever-rebelling provinces of western Asia'. Nevertheless his actual conquest was perhaps the most important turning-point in universal history. For the East, both as a geographical area and a separate social idea, having already lost its mystery now lost its meaning. Many years later there was a partial recovery and the influence of Western ideas was largely discarded, but by that time returning Europeans had brought with them more than the elements of Eastern culture, and disseminated it throughout the circle of lands accepted as the dwelling of civilized man.

CHAPTER V

ALEXANDER AND THE SELEUCID GREEKS

THE SELEUCID DYNASTY, 331-129 B.C.

<i>Death of Alexander the Great at Babylon</i>	323	Seleucus IV, Philopator	187-76
Seleucus I , Nicator		Antiochus IV , Epiphanes	
Alexander's general, founder of Seleucid dynasty	-280	‘Bohemian’ character	176-64
Antiochus I , Soter		Antiochus V , Eupator	164-2
Beginning of dissolution of Alexander's empire	280-62/1	Demetrius I , Soter	162-50
Antiochus II , Theos	261-47	Alexander Balas	150-45
Seleucus II , Callinicus	247-26	Demetrius II, Nicator	145-39/8
Seleucus III , Soter	226-3	Antiochus VI , Epiphanes	145-42/1
Antiochus III , the Great.		Antiochus VII , Sidetes.	
Successfully reconquered revolting provinces. Roman ambassadors arrive in the East. Judas Macabaeus	223-187	Defeated by Parthian king Phraates II	139/8-29
		Demetrius II, Nicator	129-5
		Cleopatra Thea	125-1
		Antiochus VIII , Grypus	125-1
		Antiochus VIII , Grypus	121-96
		Antiochus IX , Cyzicenus	115-95

IN Macedonia have been born, in the course of history, two perhaps equally remarkable men, Alexander the Great and Kemal Atatürk. Both had tremendous personal courage, phenomenal good luck and an occasional tendency to self-indulgence.²⁵ Remote as it may seem from the story of Iraq, we should perhaps glance at the country which produced them.

The south-central part of the Balkan peninsula consists of broad, flat plains fringed and crossed with rough hills. It has a rather rigorous climate and great natural resources. The Macedonians were continental Europeans at the time of Alexander's father Philip, still unexhausted by war on account of their comparative remoteness from the political centres of Greek life. Philip saw the potentialities of his people and their country and proceeded to augment their wealth by opening gold-mines and preparing them for expansion by wholesale military training. After fifteen years of almost continual war with the Greek states, he was finally, at a Congress in Corinth, elected Captain-General of all the Greeks with a view to a campaign against Persia.

The day the campaign was to begin, while leaving his tent to attend the games, he was assassinated by a private enemy.

Almost the first story we have of his son, Alexander, is an episode at a banquet shortly before Philip's death. Philip had fallen in love with the daughter of one of his generals and divorced Alexander's mother, Olympias, in order to marry her. During the wedding feast, the girl's father, being drunk, invited the company to drink to the prospect of a legitimate heir to the throne. At the insult to his mother, Alexander flung his wine in the general's face. Philip started to his feet, drawing his sword, but being equally drunk himself, reeled and fell; whereupon Alexander remarked, 'Behold the man who would pass from Europe into Asia, and trips in moving from couch to couch'.

When he succeeded his father it was accepted as a matter of course that he should carry through the campaign against Persia, and he at once occupied himself with preparations. He spent some time in subduing Thrace, to avoid leaving a hostile people in his rear on the northern shore of the *Marmora*. When his fleet transported the army safely across the *Dardanelles*, he was the first to leap ashore, and travelled straight to the site of *Troy*, where he dedicated his own armour in the Homeric shrine, taking instead some relic of *Achilles* which hung upon the walls. In a minor battle on the banks of the river *Granicus* he easily defeated a Persian army, and marched southwards, following, from *Sardis* onwards, very much the same line as *Cyrus* and *Xenophon*.

At *Gordion* he had a rendezvous with relief troops from *Macedonia*. While he awaited these he was taken to see the famous chariot of *King Midas*' son, *Gordion*, concerning which there was a legend that whoever loosed the knot with which the yoke was attached would 'rule over Asia'. Alexander forced the issue by unceremoniously severing it with his sword. Reaching *Tarsus*, he found no diversion of the sort which had delayed *Cyrus*. He merely caught cold bathing in the river *Cydnus*, whose waters have retained an evil reputation to this day, and almost died of pneumonia. When he recovered he descended, like *Cyrus*, towards the *Syrian Gate*.

It is necessary at this point again to notice an alternative way of passing from *Cilicia* into north *Syria*, literally represented today by *Toprakkale*, a junction-station on the *Turkish*

main line. Darius, the Persian king, who had now collected an army of 40,000 men and marched to the defence of his realm, was consequently faced with a problem. Would the invader take the mountain road, or would he try to force the coastal passage, as Cyrus had done? Contrary as it would seem now to all probability, he decided on the former, and marched expectantly over the passes of Anti-Taurus. He arrived at Toprakkale to find himself in the rear of Alexander, who was making for Sakal Tutan. Alexander had, in fact, already passed through into Syria and was held up by a storm at Myriandus, when he received news of Darius' whereabouts. He now returned in his tracks, and the armies met at the opposite sides of a stream at Issus, a little north of the Gate. What followed need not be recounted in detail, but, since this was the first of a series of major battles in which the Macedonian army was so invariably victorious against whatever odds, one must pay that army the compliment of pausing to examine its composition.

Most formidable of all and most characteristic were the regiments of the *phalanx*. These numbered, in later times, up to 20,000 men, carrying huge pikes 20 feet long, swords, helmet, greaves and shield. They were trained to fight in sixteen receding ranks with their shields linked, the first five ranks with spears at-the-charge. Next came the *hypaspists*, a lighter infantry carrying round Macedonian shields. Their *corps d'elite* were the famous 'silver shields'. Then there were the *peltasts* with lighter shields still, and missile-shooters, mostly of subject races. The aristocracy of the infantry were the guard who protected Alexander's person, and, matching these in the cavalry, the *petite noblesse* of Macedonia, described as 'companions'. Finally, there were heavily mailed horse and chariots.

After Alexander's conquest of India, elephants were added. In battle they wore frontlets and crests and carried, besides the mahout on their head, a wooden tower containing four armed men. Before the fight they are supposed to have been shown the red juice of some fruit, 'either to excite them or to prevent them from being too upset by the sight of blood'.

At Issus, the day was for a moment almost lost when the *phalanx*, in crossing the stream, were compelled to scramble up the opposite bank in vulnerable disarray. But the success-

ful attack of Alexander's cavalry on the right wing had meanwhile brought him so near to where the Great King stood in his chariot, that Darius' courage forsook him, and he fled, leaving his army in confusion. He also abandoned a group of wailing women, whom Alexander discovered on his return from the pursuit.

'Thou hast', he wrote to Darius a little later, 'only to come to me to ask and receive thy wife and mother and children, and whatever else thou mayest desire. And for the future, whenever thou sendest, send to me as the Great King of Asia, and do not write to me as an equal, but tell me whatever thy need be as one that is lord of all that is thine. But if thou disputest the kingdom, then wait and fight for it again, but do not flee; for I will march against thee wherever thou mayest be.'

Alexander now showed his wisdom by not following Darius into the heart of Asia, but turning south, first of all to secure Phoenicia and Egypt. Of the cities of the coast only Tyre refused to submit, and its siege was perhaps the most difficult of all Alexander's military undertakings.

Tyre, or rather the village which men still call Tyre, stands on a little headland connected to the shore by a sandy promontory. The city, in Alexander's time, was unconnected with the land, and this promontory is the direct result of Alexander's siege. Tyre is, in fact, described in literature of the time of Rameses III as 'a city lying in the sea. Water is carried to it in boats. It is richer in fish than in sand'. Certainly its siege by Alexander must have been the most exciting and picturesque in the whole history of fortified towns.

Alexander began to build a causeway out towards the island, using stone from the ruins of Palaeotyros, an early predecessor of the present city on the mainland. He had to build wooden towers to protect his workmen, and these were repeatedly set on fire by Tyrian fireships. Next he brought up his fleet, and partly by a fluke of weather put the Tyrian fleet out of action. In the final attack, siege-engines were brought up on huge rafts, while two triremes stood by, one filled with *hypaspists* and the other bristling with the spears of the *phalanx*. A wide 'breach' was made and the troops landed

with Alexander at their head. Tower after tower fell, and the town submitted.

During the siege Alexander had received a deputation from Darius offering an enormous ransom for his family and a military alliance. During the discussion of this proposal in council, Parmenio, one of the companions, is supposed to have said, 'If I were you, I should accept', to which Alexander made his famous repartee, 'So should I, if I were you'.

He now, instead, pushed on into Egypt, where he met little resistance from the Persian satrap. From Memphis, he sailed down to the sea, and between the shore and Lake Mareotis himself traced out the ground-plan of the most famous of his new cities, Alexandria. Before returning to resume his attack on Babylonia, he took the wise step of sacrificing to the Egyptian gods and assuming the title of 'Son of Ammon'.

Alexander's approach to Iraq was eventually eastwards from Der-*ez-zor* to the Tigris, which he crossed some way above Mosul. Gaugamela, where he found Darius encamped, and fought the deciding battle of his career, was almost certainly on the banks of the river Gomel Su, whose name is similarly derived. Confusion is sometimes caused by the tendency to call it the 'battle of Erbil', because it was to Arbela, twenty miles to the south, that Alexander brought the Persian spoil when all was over.

Darius' army in this case is said to have numbered about a million men of all nations including Greek mercenaries and a hundred scythed chariots. His cavalry alone outnumbered Alexander's whole force, so that the perpetual danger of the Macedonians was that of being outflanked or taken in the rear. In face of this difficulty, Alexander's tactics were masterly and merit observation. Having declined to make a night attack with the contemptuous words 'I do not steal victory', he drew up his troops in the morning, with Parmenio and the cavalry, as usual, on the left, the *phalanx* in the centre and the *hypaspists* on the right. Portions of each extremity were set back diagonally to meet any outflanking movement of the enemy. As he advanced, Alexander was, in fact, outflanked by the whole of the enemy's left. He therefore bore obliquely to the right and continued to move his heavy squadrons in the same direction. The Macedonians were thus moving off the ground which had been levelled for the scythe-

chariots, and Darius ordered a flank-charge to check them, 'but the archers shot down the horses and drivers, and the *hypaspists*, opening their order, let the chariots rattle harmlessly by'.²⁶ A gap was caused thus, in the Persian left wing, into which Alexander plunged at the head of his cavalry and split the line in two. Meanwhile the *phalanx* marched remorselessly against the centre. Again Darius himself began to lose his nerve, and what had happened at Issus was repeated at Gaugamela. He turned his chariot, and his Persians flying with him swept along with them the troops posted in the rear. Alexander abandoned the pursuit at a cry for help from Parmenio, who was having a bad time on the left, but returning to his assistance met a complete army-corps of Persians and elephants making a dignified withdrawal. A tremendous fight ensued in which he was eventually victorious at the cost of losing sixty of the 'companions', and when he reached Parmenio, he found that he had fortunately succeeded in extricating himself from the enveloping right wing of the Persians and in driving them back. The battle was won, and the fate of Asia decided.

Alexander again resumed the pursuit of Darius, but in vain. It seems that the speed which Herodotus attributed to Persian messengers was only rivalled by that of Persian kings in flight, for, by the time he reached Arbela next morning, the royal party had taken the 'gorge' road to Rowanduz and the mountains. In Erbil, which still stands today, ageless and indestructible, reared up a hundred feet above the plain on the ruins of forgotten buildings, for motorists to point out to one another as the 'oldest continuously inhabited city in the world', Alexander deposited his spoils, and 'menaced with contagion caused by effluvia from the dead bodies lying in all the plains', moved down towards Babylon.

When Alexander reached Babylon, the satrap Mazaeus, who had fought bravely at Gaugamela, handed over the city without further resistance in the presence of 'a great proportion of the inhabitants who stood upon the walls eager to get a glimpse of their new sovereign'. His policy here was just what it had been in Egypt. Mazaeus was reinstated as governor, but he himself appeared as champion of the religious Babylonians against their barbarian oppressors. He even piously

planned to rebuild the temples of the gods, as a good Babylonian king would do on his accession.*

After resting his army, he moved up to Susa, the summer residence of the Persian kings, which lies in an upland valley about a hundred and twenty miles north of Basrah. Here, amongst much precious loot, he discovered, and was able to return to Athens, the sculptured group of tyrant-slayers, Harmodius and Aristogiton, which Xerxes had carried off. But to reach Persepolis, the fortress palace, which Darius the Great had made the glory of the Achaemenid dynasty, involved another encounter with the remnants of the army he had already routed at Gaugamela. In the end he carried the mountain passes by a succession of surprise marches and established himself triumphantly in 'the richest of all cities under the sun'. Here he relaxed for four months and indulged in a succession of entertainments no doubt commensurate with the epic scale of the accomplishment which they celebrated. One, in any case, developed on regrettable lines.

On this occasion, Alexander and his 'companions' having drunk deep, Thais, 'an Attic courtesan', conceived the bright and somewhat boisterous idea of setting fire to the palace where the destruction of Greece had so often been planned. Alexander himself hurled the first brand, and the vast building was soon burning gaily. Much of the precious cedarwood and carved ornament was destroyed before the king's head was cooled and the fire quenched.†

On his way from Persepolis to Ecbatana, the Median capital, where he now heard that Darius had settled, Alexander received a surprising present from the satrap of Media, consisting of fifty thousand horses 'of distinguished size and beauty' and 'a hundred female barbarians, expert equestrians, armed with half-moon shields and battle-axes'. What with one thing and another, when he eventually reached Ecbatana, Darius had already left for Bactria. Before he had gone far, however, his own retinue turned against him and he was assassinated. Alexander, when he was shown the body, 'threw

* The great stage-tower of E-sagila he found in an altogether too discouraging state. 'It was thought that ten thousand men would not be able to remove the fallen rubbish in two months.'

† Before me, as I write, lies a report by Dr Erich Schmidt on the University of Chicago excavations at Persepolis. There is a fine panorama of the palace ruins, in which one sees the 'Harem of Darius and Xerxes, which now serves as quarters for the Expedition'.

his cloak over it in pity and dispatched it with all honour to the Queen Mother'. So ended the House of the Achaemenids.

There is no need for us to follow Alexander beyond Ecbatana in his progress towards central Asia and northern India, a quarter of the world of whose geography he must have been even more ignorant than the average European is today. One isolated episode, after he had reached the Indus and was returning, is worth relating because it conjures up a physical personality.

Two scaling-ladders had been placed against the walls of an Indian fortress, but his men were reluctant to mount them owing to the rain of missiles. Alexander, apparently losing his patience and his temper, snatched a shield and went up himself. The *hypaspists*, seeing him standing exposed on the wall-top, sprang in a mass to the ladders, which promptly gave way. When they implored him to leap down, he merely turned and did so on the inside of the wall. Having no more ladders, it was some time before the Macedonians managed, by driving pegs into the wall, to reach the top, and they found the king at bay defending himself against the entire garrison. But he was badly wounded, and his armour-bearer, who was the first to arrive, was compelled to stand over him with the holy shield of Troy until his guard fought off the Indians, and his men without forced the gates.

Alexander returned to Babylonia, sailing up the Tigris from the Persian Gulf to Opis, removing on the way the weirs which the Persians had built to prevent navigation. He planned now to make Babylon a maritime centre, connecting it by trade routes not only with India but with Egypt, by the canals between the Red Sea and the Nile. He even set about building a great harbour. At the same time preparations were being made for a campaign in Arabia. A two-day banquet, on the eve of the departure of this expedition, left Alexander sick with fever. On the sixth day he died.

Into thirty-two years, this extraordinary young man had compressed the energies and experience of many lifetimes. His death was less a freak of fate than the direct consequence of the intensity with which the flame of his life had burned.

His somewhat nebulous ideas, at the time of Gaugamela, of championing the religion and customs of the people he conquered, had crystallized into a prodigious determination to

fuse East and West together into an individual world, inhabited by united peoples. Ten thousand of his Macedonians had followed his advice and taken Asiatic wives, while a body of thirty thousand Hellenized barbarians was the outcome of his attempt at universal conscription on a basis of absolute racial equality. The seeds of fusion were already sown when he died, and though it may be said that his Empire, as such, died with him, the effects of his imperial policy were practically uneffaceable.

Seleucid Greeks

The so-called Seleucid period, following Alexander's death, during which the ever-diminishing fragments of his empire were fought over and mutilated by a motley crowd of his would-be successors, lasted about two hundred years. It would be more than tedious and at times impossible to give a continuous account even of the repercussions on Iraq of this sorry process of disintegration. One can only select isolated events and personalities for their individual significance or historical implications.

At Alexander's death there were no more obvious aspirants to the throne than his half-witted younger brother and the son to whom Roxana, his peasant-wife, was about to give birth. The proclamation of a co-regency initiated a period of thirty years' confusion and intrigue, from which eventually there emerged to divide the inheritance two quite different personalities, both of them generals and sometime friends of Alexander's. The remaining aspirants, 'transient embarrassed phantoms of the Royal House, regents of the Empire hardly less transient, upstart satraps, and even one-eyed Antigonos who for a brief moment claimed jurisdiction over all the East—never mattered long to the world at large and matter not at all to us now'.

The end of the fourth century B.C. finds Ptolemy founding a dynasty of Macedonian Pharaohs in Egypt, and Seleucus walking upon the terraces where Nebuchadnezzar had asked 'Is this not great Babylon which I have built by the might of my power and for the glory of my Majesty?', lord at least of Mesopotamia and Syria, the choicest provinces of Asia.

Actually Seleucus does not seem to have been impressed by Babylon. For, inspired no doubt by Alexander's example, he almost at once set about founding a new capital for the Babylonian province. The old city was too conservative. Since Alexander's death it had resumed much of its original character, and amongst the crowds in the bazaar the mailed figure of an occasional Macedonian soldier was the only reminder of Greek domination. Here and there, Alexander's nobles had attempted to acclimatize the flowers and shrubs of their native land. Vines had been introduced for the first time, and one enterprising gardener is known to have planted ivy. But a few Euphrates summers had been sufficient to frustrate their forlorn efforts, and the palms and dusty eucalyptus were no doubt again in the ascendancy. Moreover a capital in a more central position seemed to Seleucus essential. So, after some difficulty with the magi, who were unwilling to proclaim an auspicious day for laying the foundations, because they recognized in the act the death-warrant of Babylon, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris was eventually built, on the right bank of that river about twenty miles below modern Baghdad.

Although, as we have seen, during Seleucus' lifetime Berossus chronicled the kings of Babylon, thereby revealing to posterity all that was known of Mesopotamian history until the decipherment of cuneiform at the end of the last century, Seleucus himself has no biographer. One curious story about him, however, suggests a surprisingly tolerant character for so great a soldier and administrator. When past middle age, he married a young wife called Stratonice who seems to have had a strong appeal for his son Antiochus. The boy began to pine inexplicably, and when his physical condition became serious, the court physician explained the cause of his sickness to his father. Seleucus' extremely reasonable solution of the problem was to pass Stratonice on to Antiochus, together with the western half of his kingdom. He later defended himself against the charge of incest with the words: 'The king's decree makes every action right.' As a capital for the western half, he founded Antioch on the Orontes in north Syria, which now became one of the focal points of Hellenistic life, and later the richest city in the world. Soon afterwards, on his way to end his life peacefully in Macedonia, he was tragically murdered by a young son of the Egyptian Ptolemy.

The first Antiochus thus inherited an empire which was a sick man from its birth. Its revival had occupied the few glorious years of his father's reign, its dissolution occupied his own reign and that of ten succeeding kings. Partially restored again and again, it lapsed almost at once into new ruin. The restorations become less and less complete, until eventually the most that can be said is that it served the purpose of sustaining Hellenism in the East until the advent of Rome.

Little indeed need be said about the reign of the second Antiochus or for that matter about those of a second and a third Seleucus. The almost continuous wars of succession make a dreary story; and at one point, as if 'upstart satraps' were not enough, we find two regent queen-mothers, Berenice and Laodice, fighting over the seniority of their infant sons.

The next king of any importance is Antiochus III, called 'the Great'. In him the house of Seleucus does to some extent seem to have renewed its youth. He invaded first Persia and then 'hollow Syria', the richly fertile cleft between the ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, where the ruins of Baalbek stand, and made a partially successful attempt to regain Asia Minor. He even reached Sardis, and besieged his rival Seleucid, Achaeus, in the famous fortress which, built on a rock, had the reputation of being impregnable. Its fall in this case was due to a remarkably intelligent piece of observation work on the part of one of Antiochus' captains. This man, as the weeks elapsed, became interested in a certain part of the wall where every few days a mass of rubbish was flung down over an almost vertical cliff face. Scavenger birds collected on the accumulating pile, and, when satisfied, to his surprise flew up to digest their meal perched on the battlements above. From this he rightly concluded that the garrison were relying on the natural defences of that part of the fortifications. The cliff was not too steep for a party of skilled climbers after dark, and his surmise proved correct. They scaled the wall unopposed and opened the gates from within. Achaeus, however, had time to withdraw to the even more inaccessible citadel. Thence he was dislodged only owing to the astonishing treachery of two Cretan captains, who had been offered an enormous reward by his friends in Egypt to rescue him. With a cynicism which was traditionally associated with the descendants of the Minoans at that time, they demanded and

received an equally large sum from Antiochus for diverting the rescue into an ambush. Achaeus, as was usual in these cases, was mutilated and beheaded.

After this Antiochus was summoned to suppress a revolt in Media, which he did successfully in Ecbatana, the capital, and because international morals at the time were at a low ebb he despoiled the last remaining temple, carrying off the gold-sheathed columns and silver tiles which were famous throughout the world. He thus incurred the fury of the Medes, and personal detestation so violent that his crime was not considered expiated until, generations later, their descendants had overthrown and displaced the Seleucid dynasty.

It is at about this juncture in the story of the eastern nations that Roman ambassadors first appear in the Levant, and ominous stories begin to be told of a new and ambitious power in the western Mediterranean. The next few years of Antiochus' reign were spent, first in trying to appear unconcerned at the obvious thrust of Rome towards the east, and later in planning to forestall it, by himself attacking through Greece. Some years before, he had made an abortive attack on Egypt and been repulsed by the contemporary Ptolemy. He was now warned by the Romans, who had already singled out Alexandria as an important new sphere of influence, not to repeat this aggression, and at once with deceptive complacency married his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy Epiphanes.*

After this he made another curious contact. In Tyre he met Hannibal, the famous Phoenician general, who had withdrawn thither after the conclusion of the Punic wars between Rome and Carthage, and was doubtless able to give him much advice as to the possibilities of an expedition across the Mediterranean.

Some years later his invasion of Greece materialized, and in spite of the precaution which he, like Alexander the Great, took, of sacrificing on the site of Troy beforehand, it was a complete fiasco. His army, which included an exclusive little party of three elephants, was completely defeated in the pass called Thermopylae in an engagement so exactly resembling the classical battle on the same spot that one is tempted to

* Cleopatra from now onwards replaced Berenice and Arsinoe as the characteristic name of Ptolemaic queens. The most famous bearer of the name lived two hundred years later.

wonder if the implications of Xerxes' previous experience there had escaped Antiochus' notice. He also suffered a second reverse at Magnesia in Anatolia, and so lost Asia Minor to Rome. Three years afterwards he succumbed to his own weakness for loot, being killed in an attack on a rich temple-city in Luristan.

From the death of Antiochus the Great onwards, more and more fantastic figures appear upon the Seleucid throne. The next conspicuous personality is Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, Bevan's description of whom as a 'somewhat Bohemian character' is perhaps an understatement.²⁷ He loved the splendour of royalty, but found the restraint and solemnity of court etiquette intolerable boredom. As a result he would often give his courtiers the slip. 'Some party of young men drinking late together might hear the noise of a fresh company of revellers drawing near with horns and psalteries, and be startled by the sudden apparition of the King. . . . Sometimes at midday he would be seen, flushed with wine, tossing money by handfuls into the street.' Again, 'You kings are lucky, using such perfumes and smelling so good' a man shouts from the crowd, and Antiochus orders a vessel of choice myrrh to be broken over his head. 'There is a general rush to wallow in the spilt unguent, a scrimmage and tumble on the slippery floor, in which among shrieks of laughter the King joins.'

The humorous and sybaritic citizens of Antioch viewed his antics with easy toleration, but even they at times seemed to have been a little shocked. We see him, for instance, at a banquet celebrating his return from a successful campaign. He is 'up and down among his guests, sitting, standing, declaiming, or bandying jests with the professional mummers. The crowning moment was one evening towards the end of the feast, when the company had begun to grow thin. The mummers brought in a swaddled figure and laid it on the ground. Suddenly at the notes of the *symphonia*, it started from its wrappings and the King stood there, naked. The next moment he whirled away in the fantastic dance of the buffoons. The banquet broke up in confusion.'

But in spite of his eccentricities his reign was not without accomplishment. He made more or less successful expeditions to Egypt, Persia and across the Taurus, in addition to keeping his disapproving Roman ambassadors at bay. There are even

signs of a serious attempt to regenerate what remained of the Seleucid Empire by means of over-refined Hellenism. He is known to have consecrated a gigantic cryselephantine statue of Nike-bearing Zeus in the great temple of Daphne, and there is still, just discernible on the cliffs above Antioch, a curiously busted female figure, part of a group carved by Epiphanes as protection against pestilence.

Some time before he died of apoplexy, his people consented without a murmur to his deification, and he assumed the title 'The God Manifest'.

It was during this reign that the Jews of Jerusalem, oppressed by Epiphanes' cruel anti-semitism, rose in revolt, and under Judas Maccabaeus were so successful in their rebellion that on the king's death they were granted freedom to worship in their own way.

The fifth Antiochus ascends the throne at the age of nine. He has a rival in yet another Demetrius, who is meanwhile completing his education in Rome. Demetrius asks permission from the Roman Senate to supplant his cousin, but they refuse. He then receives a piece of advice from his old tutor, which might be taken straight from *Mein Kampf*: 'Do boldly,' says Polybeus, 'and the Romans will acquiesce in the accomplished fact.' So on the pretext of a hunting expedition he prepares to leave Rome secretly. Here there is a human little picture of Demetrius at a bachelor party on the night he is due to sail, and old Polybeus, who is laid up with gout, sending him cryptic messages to moderate his drinking, in case his escape should miscarry. He does, however, arrive safely in Antioch, and is acclaimed by the army and later by what remains of the Empire, but is killed a little later in a battle with another aspirant to the throne.

Then there is a worthless creature called Balas, whose paternity even is doubtful, and who surrounds himself with 'favourites and mistresses', and lets the state take care of itself.

The end of the Seleucids as a factor in history comes in the time of Antiochus VII, Sidetes. A Parthian dynasty has now appeared as a formidable power in north Persia, and its conquests already extend from Bactria to the Euphrates. Sidetes succeeds in recovering Babylonia but, pressing on into Media, he is completely defeated by the Parthian king

Phraates II. His army of 300,000 men is decimated and he himself commits suicide.

Finally, when the Parthians are again established in Mesopotamia, one watches the death-throes of Alexander's great Empire. In the end there are three separate Seleucid kingdoms in Syria alone, and, weary of dynastic feuds, the Syrians allow an Armenian king to gain supremacy over them.

CHAPTER VI

PARTHIAN PERSIANS

THE PARTHIAN KINGS, 247 B.C.-A.D. 226

Arsaces I (perhaps Tiridates I)	245-c. 211	Orodes II	A.D. 5-7
Arsaces II	c. 211-190	Vonones I	8-11
Priapatius	c. 190-75	Artabanus II	c. 10-40
Phraates I , defeated		(Tiridates III)	36)
Antiochus Sidetes	c. 175-70	(Cinnamus)	38)
Mithridates I	c. 170-38	(Vardanes I)	40-45)
Phraates II	c. 138-27	Gotarzes	40-51
Artabanus I	c. 127-4	Vonones II	51
Mithridates II , the		Vologaeses I	51-77
Great, captured Seleucia and extended empire to the Euphrates	c. 124-88	(Vardanes II)	55)
<i>Several unknown names</i>		Vologaeses II	77-9; 111-47
Sanatruces I	76-70	Pacorus	78-c. 105
Phraates III	70-57	(Artabanus III)	80-81)
Orodes I , defeated and killed Crassus. Reached the Mediterranean	57-37	Osroes . Trajan's campaign against Iraq	106-29
(Mithridates III)	57-4)	(Mithridates IV and his son Sanatruces, 115; Parthamaspates, 116-17; and other pretenders.)	
Phraates IV	37-2	Mithridates V	c. 129-47
(Tiridates II)	32-1 and 26)	Vologaeses III	147-91
Phraates V (Phraataces). Peace treaty between Rome and Parthia in year of the birth of Christ	2 B.C.-A.D. 5	Vologaeses IV	191-209
		(Vologaeses V)	209-c. 222)
		Artabanus IV , favourable treaty with Rome	209-27

IN order to place correctly the new rulers of Iraq we must retrace our steps a little. Parthia has already come to our notice as a part of north-eastern Persia roughly corresponding to the modern province of Khorasan. It became a satrapy after Alexander's death, but with the diminishing control of his successors, its satraps soon followed the example of their colleagues in even more remote Bactria, and assumed the title of king. They took Hecatompylos, one of the cities newly founded by Alexander, as their capital and ruled for some time merely on sufferance. But when an early Parthian king, Tiridates, actually succeeded in defeating a Seleucid army, and another Mithridates, after conquering Media, moved his headquarters to the more celebrated city, Ecbatana, they felt more safely established. It was Mithridates also who captured Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, and extended the Parthian kingdom

eventually from the Oxus to the Euphrates. We have already seen one of his successors obliterate the army of Antiochus Sidetes, so that not a man returned to Antioch, and firmly assert himself in Iraq.

A strangely incongruous presence in the oldest and sometime most civilized country in the world, these semi-barbaric northern kings found themselves repeatedly compelled to defend it against the covetous imperialism of the Romans. The threat of Armenian rivalry had also become serious, and for some time there was a three-sided struggle, from the scanty records of which one gathers that at one point Tigranes, the Armenian king, actually succeeded in temporarily appropriating Babylonia.

In the course of the more carefully recorded struggles between Rome and Parthia which followed, and later in the time of the Sassanian kings, a group of fortified towns lying not actually in Iraq but on the natural frontier between the two empires are continually 'in the news'. It will perhaps be better to speak of them here, so that when they occur in the story they may not be mere names.

First and foremost, then, Antioch on the Orontes, in north Syria, having become a great eastern metropolis and a byword for luxury, was used by all the Roman emperors as a base in their campaigns across the Euphrates. The town stands mostly in the valley, but throws up a tiara of embattled walls over the rocky flank of the mountain which overhangs it. Here and on the surrounding hillsides, the villas of the richer citizens were built in terraces. Even the ruins which are now being excavated, with their colonnaded swimming pools and ubiquitous mosaics, give an impression of *savoir vivre*. The modern town, which does not occupy one tenth of the area enclosed by the fortifications, has a very special charm. It is embowered in a luxury of fruit orchards and flowering shrubs, and its inhabitants, at least until the recent return of the Turks, wore the gayest coloured clothes imaginable.

Nearby is the famous Vale of Daphne; whither the nymph according to legend was pursued by Apollo and transformed into an oleander. Here, now in Roman times, 'the vigorous youth pursued, like Apollo, the object of his desires; and the blushing maid was warned by the fate of Daphne to shun the folly of unseasonable coyness'.²⁸

The rich Romans in fact treated Daphne as a sort of Sunday resort, suitable for *fetes champetres* and other entertainments, so that *daphnici mores* became a current Latin expression for loose behaviour. It is still everything a sacred grove should be, with thick foliage and little cascading waterfalls among the flowers. There are also nightingales, which sing in broad daylight, so that their song mingles with the voices of water, reminding one of Sacheverell Sitwell's fine description of Granada. On one visit I picked up a copper coin depicting Romulus and Remus attaching themselves to the serrated lower edge of a rather unconvincing she-wolf.

Then, travelling east, there is the Harran of Genesis, called by the Romans Carrhae, standing at the most important cross-roads of the ancient world; and a little to the north Edessa, the capital of the province called Osroene, a town we have already mentioned under its modern name of Urfa in connexion with its sacred fish. It, also, was heavily fortified by the Romans, but almost every stone of its city wall has now been quarried away for the use of modern builders.

Of three major fortresses on the main northern approach to Iraq, by far the most important was the city now called Diarbekr, than which few ancient towns make a stronger appeal to the imagination. The 'black Amida' of history, it has a five-mile circuit of basalt walls, with a double *enceinte* and eighty towers. It stands on a high cliff above the Tigris, and, since the river makes a bend in passing, it appears as one approaches from the south to be astride the gorge, barring the way from Mesopotamia to the mountain country beyond. It has watched over the varying fortunes of many imperial peoples. Its history is a long series of prodigious sieges and massacres, ending less than fifty years ago when two thousand four hundred Armenians perished within its walls. 'Black the walls and black the dogs and black the hearts of Black Amid', was to have been its epitaph. But the walls have survived into the twentieth century. Today the mountain Kurds ride into the Diarbekr market in European clothes, and there is a radio aerial on every house.

Between Amida and Nisibis was Dara, which as a city did not survive the passing of the Roman Empire. One knows of its present state only from Budge, who says: 'I have never seen anything like it before or since. Only giants or Titans

or an earthquake could have wrenched these massive slabs and blocks of stone from their positions, and smashed them into pieces, and scattered them in all directions. It is literally true that no stone stands upon another at Dara. The Roman soldiers drafted there must have led a monotonous life, for the buildings and walls and towers, even when complete, must always have been ugly, and the dreary, terrifying desert, which surrounds the place and extends away indefinitely, must have been then as now most depressing.' ²⁹

Nisibis, itself, was up till a few years ago familiar to those travelling to Iraq by train as a little group of mud hovels on a low hill near the rail-head. Scarcely a stump of a Roman wall remains visible, though only the final letter of its ancient name is changed. Similarly, a little further south, where Beled Sinjar straddles a southern spur of the Sinjar hills, the ruins of Singara served as a popular gypsum quarry for the last generation of Yezidi tribesmen.

We must now return to watch how, in their Mesopotamian campaigns, the fortunes of the Roman emperors hinged upon the defence or assault of these strongholds.

The first serious Roman attack on Parthia was made by Crassus in the same year as Julius Caesar invaded Britain. That summer actually he did hardly more than ravage an outlying Parthian district, before returning to winter in Antioch, now Rome's headquarters in the East. But the following year he planned a more ambitious campaign. Crossing the Euphrates at Birejik, near Carchemish, he encountered Surenas, a general of the Parthian king Orodes, at Harran, and a battle ensued in which the Romans had a first taste of the peculiarities of Scythian tactics, and the devastating mobility of an 'all-horse army'.

The Parthian principle of attack seems to have been very much that which one used to see adopted by American Indians in films of the 'covered wagon' type. Crassus' army, unable to find a stable unit to charge, were surrounded by a wildly galloping rodeo of mounted bowmen, who rained a devastating shower of arrows upon them, but at the same time afforded no target for their own missiles. These were the famous 'light' Parthian cavalry, whose equipment was in fact so light that it did not amount to more than a headstall and single rein for the horse, and for his rider, a tunic, a bow and a handful of

arrows. In contrast to these the 'heavy' brigade were armed to their horses' knees in burnished steel, but they for the moment remained under cover of a small wood.

Crassus watched the Parthian arrows play havoc with his troops, but supposing that each rider's supply would soon be exhausted, at first held to his formation. Then to his horror he observed that each horseman as he took his last shot retired to a distance and obtained a fresh supply from enormous quivers carried by camels in the rear. It thus became essential to act. He had with him a picked force of six thousand Gauls sent by Julius Caesar from Europe, and these he now sent with his son at their head to attack the Parthian 'heavies' who had just appeared from the wood. The enemy, apparently disconcerted by the onslaught of so many outlandish Frenchmen, turned in flight and continued to withdraw until they were completely out of touch with the main armies. They then wheeled, mustered suddenly and presented a dense mass of bright metal to their pursuers. The Gauls fought bravely, dodging beneath the horses to strike upwards, or pulling their ponderous riders to the ground, but they were outnumbered and eventually cut to pieces. Crassus' son persuaded his shield-bearer to aid him in avoiding the dishonour of being almost the only survivor.

Meanwhile the fate of the rest of the army was postponed only by nightfall. During their retreat next day, three-quarters were killed, and amongst them the sixty-year-old Crassus himself. His head (Plutarch states) was sent to Armenia, where Orodes had gone in connexion with a marriage treaty. It arrived while a performance of Euripides' *Bacchae* was in progress. There is an incident in the play concerning a severed head, and that of Crassus was used for this incident by the actor, who made a topical 'gag' (recorded in Plutarch) about it. This curious story has just that suggestion of imperfect classical culture which one detects in Parthian architecture.

Julius Caesar seems to have been much shaken by the news of the disaster at Harran, and himself was planning an expedition to punish Parthia when the Ides of March came upon him. During the days of confusion which followed his death the project temporarily was forgotten.

Orodes, on his side, after reigning quietly for a time, took

courage to march westwards. His son Pacorus successfully invaded Syria and Phoenicia. Palestine he found in its 'normal condition of intestinal commotion' and, receiving an offer from one faction of a thousand talents and five hundred Jewesses for his assistance, he readily agreed to set their leader upon the throne in Jerusalem as Parthian satrap.

At this point Mark Antony, who was in Egypt, decided that steps should be taken to stem the Parthian invasion, and Pacorus was killed in an engagement with a Roman army under one of Antony's lieutenants. Later Antony himself was tempted to follow up this success by an attack on Parthian territory. But he was sidetracked by his Armenian allies into a campaign against the Median states in northern Persia. His failure to master local tactics resulted in a disastrous retreat in which he lost a large part of his army, and he withdrew to the doubtful consolations of life in Alexandria.

Meanwhile a minor insurrection in Parthia resulted in the new king, Phraates, being temporarily deposed and compelled to fly to Scythia for help. In his absence the rebels sent his young son to Rome as a present, an episode which was only important because some years later, after Phraates' restoration, the Emperor Augustus was able to exchange this boy for the Roman standards which had been captured from Crassus and Antony, and thereby pave the way for peace between Rome and Parthia.

In the year of the birth of Jesus Christ a treaty was signed under spectacular circumstances on an island in the Euphrates with the two great hosts facing each other on either bank.

After this there is a distinctly dark period, at least in the history of Iraq, and the portraits of Parthian kings on contemporary coins become more and more peculiar. At one moment two Hebrew gangsters become joint satraps of Babylonia. Yet the peace with Rome seems to be fairly lasting. Armenia is for some time a bone of contention between the two nations, but in the time of Nero a brother of the Parthian king, Tiridates, is set upon the Armenian throne and his investiture takes place in Rome. Later writers tell how 'according to the ordinary etiquette of the Roman Court, Tiridates was requested to lay aside his sword before approaching the Emperor; but this he declined to do; and the difficulty seemed serious until a compromise was suggested, and he was allowed

to approach wearing the weapon, after it had first been carefully fastened to the scabbard by nails'.³⁰

After Nero's death only small incidents created minor diversion, such as when the second Pacorus gave some encouragement to Terence, the preposterous potter of Edessa, who, being the late Emperor's double, succeeded for a time in impersonating him and creating an insurrection.*

The peace ends in the time of Trajan, and an almost continuous procession of Roman armies down the Euphrates begins. Generally they reach the interior of Babylonia; Ctesiphon, the new Parthian capital, is repeatedly sacked; but always the process of aggression needs to be repeated in the next reign.

One of the contributory causes of the first of these great Roman invasions was the Emperor Trajan's inordinate admiration of Alexander the Great, and much of his strategical behaviour may be attributed to a desire to emulate the Greek hero. For instance he took the precaution of securing Armenia before marching south, in order to protect his rear. He then divided his forces, sending half down the Euphrates to the Khabur and the other half in the tracks of the Macedonian army eastwards to Nisibin. Both forces met with considerable success, but, the summer being nearly ended, he left a corps of engineers in Nisibin, with instructions to build boats for crossing the Tigris, and himself returned to winter in Antioch. This decision very nearly cost him his life. A few weeks later there occurred one of those appalling catastrophes which have so frequently visited that city: an earthquake so serious that it brought the rocks of Mount Cassius crashing down among the houses. Almost every building of note was laid flat, and a quarter of a million corpses were buried beneath the ruins. The Emperor himself was injured, and escaped with difficulty through a window.

This disaster did not, however, prevent him from continuing his Parthian campaign in the following spring. The boats built in Nisibis were transported on wagons to Jazirat ibn Omar (where we last saw the Ten Thousand leaving Mesopotamia), and the Roman army made a contested crossing of the Tigris. Gaugamela, Nineveh (meaning probably Mosul),

*In this connexion one can recommend Feuchtwanger's novel *False Nero* for the excellent picture he gives of Antioch and the border provinces of Osroene and Samosata at this time.³¹

and Erbil fell, and the province called Diabene to which they belonged was added to the empire. Instead of marching directly on the capital, Trajan then rather surprisingly recrossed the Tigris, and turned westwards across the barren, undulating wilderness which separates the two rivers south of Mosul. He thus passed, and received the submission of, Hatra, which lies in its centre, about thirty miles west of Ashur.

The ruins of this extraordinary city today stand stark and bare in the midst of a great solitude, and constitute one of the few surviving stone monuments of Iraq. Nearby there is a shallow gully, in which a fairly considerable stream of water flows, for part of the year only. The Arabs call this Wadi Tharthar, and it is shown in the maps of some of their ancient geographers as running from the Khabur river diagonally across the desert to join the Tigris near Tekrit. At present it is fed in the spring by one or several of the streams running down from the Sinjar hills, and I have not personally been able to find any channel which could possibly connect it with the Syrian river. Furthermore I am told by irrigation engineers that it would have needed to run uphill to reach the Tigris, and that its surplus must always, as it does at present, have evaporated in the great depression west of Samarra.*

In any case the water of the Tharthar seems to have been sufficient to sustain at the time of Trajan a very large city, with a line of its own kings who were considered to be 'of Arabian stock'. The enclosure wall, which was circular, had a circumference of three miles. In the centre was the mysterious temple-palace, much of which still stands, a rare example of Parthian architecture.

Leaving Hatra, Trajan reached the Euphrates and made contact with a second fleet which had meanwhile descended that river. In this he sailed down to Babylon, and then, since the Tigris fleet had apparently been abandoned, transferred his ships from one river to the other 'on rollers'.

All the time, Osroes, the Parthian king, had kept at a

* My first visit to Hatra was on a fine spring day in 1939, and I was accompanied by a squadron of touring cars full of stout Shammar sheikhs. Although the Tharthar was in spate they were not satisfied that it was impassable until a negro servant, whom they tied to a rope and sent into the water, was carried expostulating downstream. A bridge is now being built which will benefit tourists, as well as the Shammar flocks.

distance, and Trajan now even took Ctesiphon without resistance, and captured Osroes' daughter. After packing up and dispatching to Antioch the golden throne of Parthia and other treasures, he embarked on what amounted to a leisurely pleasure-cruise down the Tigris. He sailed on to the Persian Gulf, and was indulging in wistful speculations about India and regret at his advancing age when disturbing news reached him from the north. Osroes had returned, and all the recently conquered cities had revolted in his rear, so that he was now compelled to retrace his steps in the summer heat, beset on all sides by enemies. Even a half-hearted attempt to re-take Hatra had to be abandoned by his army owing to the heat and the 'flies which disputed every morsel of their food and drop of their drink'.²⁸

Soon afterwards Trajan died. His successor Hadrian relinquished the three provinces which survived from his conquests, and withdrew behind the Euphrates. He also returned to Osroes his throne and his daughter, so that the *status quo* in Parthia was almost exactly restored.

Fifty years later Parthia was again conquered and Ctesiphon sacked by a Roman general called Cassius, sent to the East by Marcus Aurelius. His troops brought back a pestilence which they had collected in Babylon, and for some time Italy was ravaged by it.

Septimius Severus repeated the process twice in a single lifetime. He also made his headquarters at Nisibis, and when for a short time Parthia became a Roman province, this town took its place among the many ephemeral capitals of Iraq. In his second campaign Severus also thought it worth while to besiege Hatra. But the Hatrians resisted every method of attack, until his legions, like Trajan's, revolted at the heat.

The last Roman attack on Parthia was made by Severus' son Caracalla, whose wanton brutality and treachery are hard to believe. His method of approach was to ask for the daughter of the Parthian king in marriage, and to wait till the whole army and population of Ctesiphon turned out in festival dress to witness the ceremony before setting his soldiers to massacre them. Furthermore, on his return through Diabene he saw fit to rifle the Parthian royal tombs and scatter their contents. These tombs were situated at Arbela, the modern Erbil, 'a town which seems to have been always regarded as in some

sort a City of the Dead'.^{28*} Their destruction was an act of such insulting and useless impiety that the Parthians, even in their now exhausted state, could never forgive it. Caracalla himself was murdered soon afterwards; the battle which ended the struggle between Rome and Parthia was fought between his successor, Macrinus, and Artabanus IV, the last Parthian king. It took place near Nisibis, and Herodian describes how 'the heaps of dead were piled to such a height that the manoeuvres of the troops were impeded by them and at last the contending hosts could scarcely see one another'. Finally terms were made by which Macrinus agreed to return all the booty and captives Caracalla had taken, and to pay the equivalent of a million and a half pounds in compensation for his sacrilege at Erbil.

But the days of Parthian kings were now numbered, and the cause of their downfall lay in quite a different quarter. Just as the star of the first Persian empire had risen among the true Persians, so now a revolt in Persis heralded the birth of a third.

Today in Iraq we have a few material remains of Parthian culture; coins with the heads of quaint, episcopal-looking kings, sometimes drawn full-face, carved reliefs, almost always of horsemen, some pottery and a particular type of blue glazed 'slipper-coffin', into which the corpse was apparently drawn by a cord tied round the ankles and passed through a hole in the 'toe'.

* Assyrian and Persian kings used to bring important criminals to be executed there.

CHAPTER VII

SASSANIAN PERSIANS

THE SASSANIAN KINGS, A.D. 226-636 *

Ardashir I , founder of the Sassanian dynasty. Fought against Alexander Severus	224-41	Kobad I , fought against Anastasius and later Belisarius (Djamasp	488-531 496-8)
Sapor I , defeated Valerian	241-72	Chosroes (Khosrau) I , Anushirvan. Reformer and statesman. Probably built the Arch of Ctesiphon. Sacked Antioch	531-79
Hormizd I	272-3	Hormizd IV	579-90
Bahram I	273-6	Chosroes II , Parvez	
Bahram II	276-93	Alliance with Rome, afterwards repudiated. Fought against Heraclius. New capital—	
Bahram III	293	Dastagerd	590-628
Narseh (Narses) , fought against Valerius	293-302	(Bahram VI, Chobin, Bistam	590-6)
Hormizd II	302-10	Kobad II , Sheroe	628
Sapor II , defeated Constantius. Julian's campaign against Iraq	310-70	Ardashir III	628-30
Ardashir II	379-83	(Shahrbazar	630)
Sapor III	383-8	Boran and others	630-32
Bahram IV	388-99	Yezdegerd III	632-51
Yezdegerd I	399-420		
Bahram V (Gor)	420-38		
Yezdegerd II	438-57		
Hormizd III	457-9		
Peroz	459-84		
Balash	484-8		

THE founder of the new dynasty, Ardashir, was of distinctly plebian origin, his mother being a tanner's daughter and his father a common soldier, called Sassan. He had served with distinction in Artabanus's army at Nisibis, rose to power presumably through his own personal qualities, and championed a dissatisfied Persian minority against their Parthian overlords. These he defeated in a succession of three great battles, and was proclaimed king in Khorasan.

His efforts to revitalize the nation proceeded on conventional lines. He revived Zoroastrianism, the traditional religion of Persia, in order to combat the disintegrating effects of apathy and agnosticism which had prevailed in the latter years of the Parthian regime, and he energetically reorganized the political structure of the state. He chose Ctesiphon as its focal point,

* After Noeldeke, *Tabari*, p. 435.

but established a summer capital for himself at Ecbatana. He then turned an aggressive eye on his neighbours.

The first to take up his challenge were the Romans, who had, since his accession, been busy in Osroene fortifying Nisibis and various other strongholds with just this eventuality in mind. Ardashir now sent a deputation to the new Emperor, Alexander Severus, consisting of four hundred of his finest-looking young noblemen on their finest horses, to demand the return of all 'the Great King's' possessions, and the withdrawal of the Romans to Europe. This was of course virtually a declaration of war, and Alexander at once took the field.

According to Latin writers, Ardashir's army included 12,000 horses in complete armour, 1,800 scythe-chariots and 700 elephants; a palpable exaggeration probably calculated in some sense to excuse Alexander's small achievements in the campaign which followed. His armies did manage to penetrate into various Persian provinces, but as usual were all compelled to retire to Antioch at the end of the fighting season.

At this juncture Ardashir died. In a reign of eighteen years he had rebuilt a decayed empire by his personal energies, and laid down a code of laws which needed little modification till the end of the dynasty which he had founded. One of his political precepts is still remembered, and today is still applicable to an oriental state. 'The authority of a prince', he said, 'must be defended by military force; that force can only be maintained by taxes; all taxes must at last fall upon agriculture; and agriculture can never flourish except under the protection of justice and moderation.' But he bequeathed to his son military ambitions with which the powers and stamina of his armies were not compatible. His infantry were 'a half-armed, spiritless crowd of peasants, usually levied in haste by the allurements of plunder, and as easily dispersed by a victory as by a defeat'. His military operations were 'impeded by a useless train of women, eunuchs, horses and camels', liable to be destroyed in the middle of a campaign by an unexpected famine.

But the Persian noble families had a high standard of trained military virtue, and it was through these that the Sassanian armies continued for some time to 'threaten as an

impending cloud the eastern provinces of the declining Roman Empire'.

With the accession of Sapor we come into a full flow of historical narrative on the part of the Latin writer, Ammianus Marcellinus, and, since he himself was an eye-witness to much of what followed, events in the East acquire a reality hardly paralleled since Xenophon.³²

Sapor took up the war with Rome where his father had relinquished it, and met with instant and startling success. In a battle near Edessa he completely defeated a Roman army and seized the person of Valerian, the elderly Roman Emperor. If one can believe the atrocity propaganda of contemporary Latin writers, Sapor afterwards treated him to the most exaggerated humiliations, using him for instance as a mounting-block whenever he got onto his horse, and when Valerian finally died, after languishing for years in captivity, he was still not content, but must needs have his skin stuffed with straw in shape approximately resembling the old gentleman's original appearance, and preserve him as a curiosity in a Persian temple. Sapor then took Antioch with surprising ease, passed through Cilicia, besieging and taking such towns as Tarsus and Caesarea on the way, and was soon in the heart of Anatolia. He then returned with a great treasure looted from the coffers of Roman dominions.

Passing through northern Syria, a curious episode occurred. A caravan of rich presents was sent to him by Odenathus, king of Palmyra, which he refused with a contemptuous query as to who Odenathus was, and why he did not at once present himself bound before the Great King. Thereupon the Palmyrene replied by appearing in the flesh at the head of a minute but extremely tough army, culled from the villages and black tents of Syria, and proceeded so effectively to harry the Persian column that in the end Sapor was compelled to cross the Euphrates with unmistakable signs of precipitation, leaving behind a large part of his treasure, of which Odenathus had succeeded in relieving him. This astonishing piece of impertinence earned the little Syrian kingdom the admiration and gratitude of Rome, and Odenathus was invested with the title of 'Governor of the East', an ambiguous privilege, which some years later he bequeathed to his widow, the famous Queen Zenobia.

The name of Zenobia makes yet another small digression excusable, for she was after all, as Gibbon puts it, almost 'the only female whose superior genius ever broke through the servile indolence imposed upon her sex by the climate and manners of Asia'. In addition to being an accomplished huntress, riding astride in military uniform and marching on foot at the head of her troops on long route-marches, she was also notably good-looking and spoke Latin, Greek, Syrian and Egyptian with equal facility. She took over her husband's throne, when he was murdered by a young relative, and proceeded to invest the title 'Governor of the East' with some practical significance. Not content with appropriating several Roman provinces, she actually took up arms against the Persians and twice pursued Sapor's army almost to the gates of Ctesiphon. This could not, of course, be allowed to go on, and soon a deeply disapproving Roman Emperor appeared in Antioch with the avowed purpose of putting the unruly matron in her place.

Palmyra, or Tadmor as the Arabs call it, is situated, in terms of the modern world, between pumping-stations T.3 and T.4 on the Tripoli pipe-line. Comparable in situation with Damascus, it is built where the almost orange rocks of Anti-Lebanon drop suddenly into the beige desert. There is a deep cleft from which its temples and colonnades seem to debouch into the flat country beyond and which conceals a perpetual and abundant spring of water. Strategically it is admirably suited to fighting 'with one's back against the wall', as Zenobia now found herself. The Emperor Aurelian's attack was stoutly resisted, and the siege prolonged until the moment when the queen's courage suddenly and inexplicably collapsed and she endeavoured to escape on a dromedary. She was caught by a party of Roman horsemen, and last appears in history at Aurelian's final triumph, among the captives of his many campaigns, a strange figure, on foot, behind the Emperor's stag-drawn chariot, half fainting beneath the weight of her fabulous jewellery, huge golden shackles supported by a negro slave.

About this time Sapor died, and the brief reigns of his four successors, Hormizd I and Bahram I, II and III, need not be recorded. Narses, the seventh king in the Sassanian line, fought two important battles against Galerius, a Roman prince with whom he, as usual, disputed the possession

of Armenia. The first took place at Harran, on precisely the same ground where Crassus had lost his standards to the Parthians; its result also only differed in minor details. Galerius, returning to Antioch, was greeted with the extreme displeasure of the Emperor Diocletian and compelled to walk behind his chariot for several miles across the city. To clear his honour he repeated the attack the following year, and this time turned the tables on Narses. In this case the Roman victory seems to have been complete, for all Narses' treasure fell into their hands, and we have the, for some reason, rather irritating story of a Roman soldier who, finding a white leather bag full of enormous pearls, threw away the pearls and kept the bag 'because he supposed that nothing could be of value that was of no use'.

Omitting the reign of Hormizd II, we come to Sapor II, whose coronation must first be observed because it took place ceremonially before his birth. On the death of Hormizd the magi pronounced Sapor's mother to be *enceinte*. A royal bed upon which she lay in state was set up before the people, and the crown of Persia deposited 'upon the spot which might be supposed to conceal the future heir of Artaxerxes'.²⁸ Ctesiphon can have witnessed few more peculiar ceremonies.

Sapor had thus reigned for almost thirty years when his first serious conflict with the Romans took place. He found himself opposed in a battle near Singara to the Emperor Constantius, who was conducting the war in person. His ultimate victory involved first of all allowing the Romans to pillage his camp. He restrained his army in the hills above, until, night having fallen, feasting and general celebrations were in full swing. Then his bowmen crept down, and were enabled, by the light of the great bonfires which the Romans had made of their property, to concentrate a deadly rain of arrows on the disarmed and largely intoxicated enemy. The victory when it came was tempered for Sapor by a great sorrow; for his son and heir had somehow remained in the camp and, by one of those unpredictable vagaries of contemporary chivalry, the same Romans who had emulated Alexander by restoring the wife and family of Narses, when he fled from Galerius, now seized, tortured and executed the unfortunate crown-prince.

Sapor's next objective was Nisibis, round which the Romans

had now taken the precaution of building a triple fortification. He found it possible to divert the waters of the little Jagh-jagh river which flows past Nisibis, eventually into the Khabur, and by a series of easily constructed bunds to convert the country around into a lake. Upon this he launched a fleet of armed vessels and rafts carrying siege-engines, and was able to 'engage almost upon a level, the troops which defended the rampart'. In the end, as can be imagined, it was the water-pressure which became too much for the walls, and a wide breach appeared. The next stage of the fight must have presented a scene after the heart of some film-producers, for, into the breach, along with the rushing waters of the lake, Sapor drove a deep column of heavily armed cavalry and elephants, many of whom were actually drowned by falling into deep holes concealed by the flood. In this welter of mud, corpses and wounded animals it was impossible to distinguish victors from vanquished, and as night fell a truce was called. Next day, while the Romans were hastily repairing the damage to their wall and city, Sapor was suddenly summoned to Media to deal with a barbarian invasion.

It was not until some years later, when affairs in north Persia were satisfactorily settled, that Sapor, living quietly in Ctesiphon, had leisure to remember his quarrel with Rome. He then attempted to march directly on Antioch, but found that the Romans had profited by his absence from Mesopotamia to put insuperable difficulties in his way. He was thus compelled to turn north, and take a circuitous route through Anatolia. This involved passing by Nisibis, which with great restraint he succeeded in doing. He cast scarcely more than a prudently disdainful glance at its walls, where a hundred and fifty feet of clean, new brickwork were the only remaining evidence of the hole he had made. Amida also he had intended to pass by with no more aggressive gesture than that of marching close beneath its walls. This he did; but some 'black heart' of Amida must have been unimpressed, for an arrow hit him on the gold helmet, and, when he wheeled the army to make a furious demonstration, a shaft from a *ballista* slew the only son of his friend Grumbates who rode beside him. After this there was nothing for it but a serious siege. Seventy days were in fact wasted over Amida on this occasion, and 30,000 valuable troops, to say nothing of all the siege-

engines which Sapor had originally captured from the Romans at Singara. His elephants also seemed to have sufficiently recovered from their wetting at Nisibis to be used to some purpose, for Marcellinus' reference to them is followed by the parenthesis 'than whose noise and huge bodies the human mind can conceive nothing more terrible'. In any case Amida eventually fell and practically all the inhabitants, except Marcellinus himself and a few other distinguished Romans, expiated the indignity of Sapor's damaged helmet.

The following year the Persians contented themselves with the work of dismantling the fortification of Singara and establishing a garrison at Bezabde, Jazirat ibn Omar. They also failed to take Tekrit, a castle on the Tigris near Samarra which Gibbon describes as 'a strong, and until Tamerlane, impregnable fortress of the independent Arabs'.*

About this time a new Emperor, Julian the Apostate, arrived in Syria and settled down to winter in Antioch. Julian was undoubtedly a vivid character, and since we shall presently watch him take the now somewhat hackneyed step of marching to Ctesiphon, we may first remark the impact of his personality upon the East.

In Antioch now, 'fashion was the only law, pleasure the only pursuit, and the splendour of dress and furniture the only distinction of the citizens. The arts of luxury were honoured, the serious and manly virtues were the subject of ridicule, and the contempt for female modesty and reverent age announced the universal corruption of the capital of the East'.²⁸ This sniggering crowd of emasculate pleasure-seekers were naturally disconcerted by the rustic manners of a coldly intellectual ascetic, and the more Julian saw of Antioch the less he liked it. For one whose ambition was to revive pagan ritual, even Daphne under the Christian regime was a little disappointing. When he visited the grove on the occasion of the annual festival of Apollo, expecting processions and sacrifices, he found 'only a single goose, provided at the expense of a priest, the pale and solitary inhabitant of this decayed temple'. Later, when he found himself the subject of increasingly disrespectful lampoons, he wrote one himself in reply, a witty if indiscreet satire on the manners of Antioch,

* One of the few remaining bastions of the city wall has recently been restored.

which was exposed before the gates of the palace. He then removed his household to Tarsus.

When the spring came it was time to set about his invasion of Persia. Crossing the Euphrates he advanced to Carrhae, and then, splitting up his army, he sent half of it eastwards to Nisibis and himself marched down the Euphrates to Thapsacus, the extreme limit of the Roman dominion. Apart from his 65,000 troops he had a fleet of eleven hundred ships on the river, including fifty armed galleys and fifty flat-bottomed barges. After crossing the Khabur near its confluence with the Tigris, he cut away the bridge as a gesture of finality, and marched south. The fleet kept pace with the army and made the capture of the island fortress of Anatha (the modern Ana) a comparatively simple affair. Two other similar fortresses merely gave a promise to capitulate 'when the Romans had occupied the interior of the country', and allowed the fleet to pass unmolested beneath their very walls. Diacira, which they next reached, they found 'empty of inhabitants but full of corn and excellent salt'. Marcellinus adds 'so we burnt the city, and put a few women to death who were found there'.³² This detail is unhappily characteristic of Julian's campaign, which sometimes reaches positively Assyrian heights of cynical brutality and vandalism.

Macepracta, 'where were seen vestiges of walls half destroyed which had served to protect Assyria from foreign invasion', sounds very much like Sippar, where traces of the 'Median wall' can still be seen today. Here also they built a bridge over the 'River of Kings', the Nahr-ul-Muluk of the Arabs, near the tower which marked its entrance.

The fleet was now temporarily left behind to guard the rear, and Julian with the army marched on almost to Babylon. He sacked two more important towns, before seeing fit to turn eastwards towards the capital. Up till now every town they had taken had been reduced to ruins while 'the furious troops destroyed all that they saw, without regard to age or sex'. But drawing near Ctesiphon 'we found a palace built in the Roman fashion, which, so pleased were we with the circumstance, we left unhurt'. There was also here a large enclosure containing all manner of wild animals for the king's amusement. 'Our cavalry, however, forced the gates and killed all the beasts.'

After another important fortress on the banks of the Tigris had been taken, a respite was given to the Roman army, preparatory to their actually reaching Ctesiphon, and Gibbon benefits from this break in the narrative to embark on a considerable digression on the subject of Julian's remarkable chastity. Quoting the Latin writer Curtius to emphasize the type of people the Emperor now found himself among, he tells us that 'the matrons and virgins of Babylon freely mingled with the men in licentious banquets; and, as they felt the intoxication of wine and love, they gradually and almost completely threw aside the encumbrances of dress'. Nothing of this sort was apparently capable of shaking Julian's moral austerity, for Marcellinus is now called to witness that he would not so much as cast an eye on one of his beautiful Persian captives. Gibbon feels it necessary to add here that, according to Herodotus, although the Persian race of women is small and ugly, 'it has been improved by the perpetual mixture of Circassian blood'.

Approaching Ctesiphon on the right or Seleucid bank of the river, Julian came to a canal which Marcellinus calls the 'River of Kings'. This was not actually the Nahr-ul-Muluk (which joins the Tigris below Seleucia) but a cut previously made from that canal to a point above the capital by Severus, or perhaps (if the story of 'rollers' be discounted) by Trajan, to transfer his river transport from the Euphrates to the Tigris. Julian now cleared away the obstructions with which the Persians had filled it, and brought his fleet also to the Tigris. Soon after, the army made a surprise crossing to the Ctesiphon bank of the Tigris, and approached to within a short distance of the city, where they were met by a part of the Persian army. This time the Persian heavy cavalry were 'in such close order that their bodies dazzled the eye, fitting together, as it seemed, with their brilliant armour', while the elephants were 'like so many walking hills'. Now the Romans 'with their crested helmets, and brandishing their shields, proceeded slowly, their band playing an anapaestic measure, but soon rushed to battle with such vehemence that the earth trembled beneath them'.

To judge by the subsequent scenes of enthusiasm around the Emperor's tent, the result of this battle was morally at least a great victory for the Romans, who lost a mere seventy

men. But judged in the light of subsequent events it seems a poor climax to such a triumphant *anabasis*. The Persians were compelled to retreat within the walls of Ctesiphon, and 'received many wounds upon their legs and backs' as they did so. Yet in the Roman council of war which followed, Julian made two surprising decisions. First, it was revealed that his other army, which was intended to have descended the Tigris and been joined before the capital, had been prevented from doing so by the intractability of their Armenian allies, and that on the other hand the Persian king himself was now on his way to the relief of Ctesiphon with a vast army.

Julian therefore expressed his intention of abandoning the siege, and marching eastwards against the mountain provinces. His second decision was to destroy the fleet before doing so, lest it fall into the hands of the enemy.

The army was extremely loth to comply with this last command, and in fact their non-comprehension of Julian's motive is condoned by posterity, for whom this burning of the boats has become a classical example of military indiscretion. In extenuation one can only urge that his army was all the time short of the twenty thousand men who were required to manage the fleet, and that a return journey up the Tigris would have been made extremely difficult by the rapids above Ashur. In any case there seems to have been considerable indecision about it, even on the part of the Emperor himself; for when the boats were already in flames an attempt was made to save at least a part of them. It was not, however, successful, and when the fire died down there remained only twelve small vessels which had been put aside for use as a portable pontoon bridge.

Now Julian's march towards the mountains began, first up the Diyalah river to Baquba, and then across the blazing desert to the Jebel Hamrin. The Romans were exasperated by mirages of moving troops, and scorched by the flames of burning crops with which the Persians continually surrounded them. At last Sapor's army appeared, to contest their passage through the hills to Kirkuk, and a succession of indecisive engagements were fought. On the Persian side there was a considerable loss of satraps and elephants, but in the third encounter Julian himself, who had discarded his cuirass because of the heat, was struck by a spear which embedded

itself in his liver. Marcellinus describes how the double edge of the blade cut his hands when he endeavoured to withdraw it. He was carried dying to his tent, where he made a long and exemplary death-bed oration, and died in the middle of a metaphysical discussion with his private philosophers on the nature of the soul.

His army had fared badly in this last battle, and now, unable to pass the Jebel, they began a ghastly retreat westwards, starved and harassed by the Persians. A remnant of them reached the Tigris at a point near Samarra, crossed it at Dour, and eventually reappeared on their own frontier at Circesium. Julian was buried beside the limpid waters of the Cydnus at Tarsus, the Cilician city to which he had been driven the previous year by the taunts of Antioch. Such was the depressing end of one of the most vainglorious and futile exploits in the history of Iraq.

Julian's successor Jovian was compelled to make an ignominious treaty with Sapor, signing away Singara, Nisbis and Armenia. The Euphrates was again the eastern limit of the Roman Empire, and the line of fortress-cities became more and more conclusively the frontier between East and West. So things remained for nearly a century, during which the contacts between Rome and Persia were few, and the story of the Sassanian kings correspondingly obscure.

Of the third Sapor we know something from his rock-sculptures at Tak-i-Bustan, near Kirmanshah. Yezdegerd, called 'the Wicked', started systematic persecution of Christians, and during the reign of a second king of that name the first Christian massacre on a large scale took place at Kirkuk. Bahram Gor it is hard to think of except as 'that great hunter' of Omar Khayyam's quatrain. It is not in fact until the time of Kobad that the end of the peace with Rome brings Iraq again into the light of classical history.

Kobad waged two successive and quite separate wars with Rome. The first, in which he found himself opposed to the Emperor Anastasius, began and ended with an attack on Amida, one of the longest and bitterest sieges in its history. Every known device for defence or attack was in turn resorted to. 'The garrison caught the blows of Kobad's rams on reed mattresses, and greased the drawbridges of his wooden towers so effectively that the stormers could not cross.' One must

remember that, during these operations, the attackers and the besieged were continually within shouting distance of each other, and the virulence of feeling between them on this occasion seems to have been appalling.

When Kobad built a great earth-ramp to give access to the parapet, the besieged breached their own wall from beneath and, drawing away the core, filled it with combustibles so that it collapsed beneath the feet of the attackers, precipitating them into a blazing furnace.

Treachery ended this siege like so many others. Persian scaling-parties were led after dark to a tower guarded only by a party of monks, who slept heavily that night after a banquet. The monks awoke in paradise, and the rest of the garrison in a city already fallen captive into the hands of the enemy. The curtain falls as 80,000 corpses are carried out by the north gate, so that the king may enter through the south.

But Kobad was so discouraged by his losses that he made peace, selling his conquests to Anastasius for an exorbitant price.

During the twenty years' armistice which followed, the Emperor Justinian took upon himself the defence of the eastern frontiers of the Empire. To avoid a repetition of Kobad's attack on Amida he planned the model fortress, whose ruins we have already mentioned, at Dara, above Nisibis, on lines which were calculated to make it absolutely impregnable. It was here that Justinian's famous general Belisarius obtained his first vigorous military education; and in this connexion one may again recommend a recent historical novel. Robert Graves in *Count Belisarius* draws a picture which it is difficult to forget of this almost saintly character, and his Job-like patience in sustaining the whimsical treachery of his fickle and sometimes ridiculous master, Justinian. There is also a finely-drawn counterpoint in the relations between the two ex-prostitutes of Constantinople, Belisarius' wife Antonina and her friend the Empress Theodora.³³

At his second appearance at the head of the army on the Roman frontier, Kobad thus discovered not only a completely new and extremely forbidding-looking fortress protecting the Tigris gorge, but also a formidable enemy at the head of this legion invested with the title 'General of the East'. He sent a haughty command to the Romans to prepare him a bath on

a certain day, and then ignominiously failed to take the town. For the rest of his reign, wherever he directed his attacks he found his stratagems outwitted and his armies defeated by the acumen of an intrepid Roman.

In his old age he at last began to adopt a more conciliatory attitude and conceived the idea of having his appointed successor, Chosroes, adopted by Justin, the new Roman Emperor, and thereby ensuring some sort of *rapprochement*. But the negotiations broke down when the boy was already on the way to present himself, and about the same time Kobad died.

Early in his reign Chosroes contrived to make peace with Rome. At first he endeavoured to stipulate that Dara should be completely dismantled, but he did not insist when he had received an assurance that it would never again be used as headquarters for the General of the East. There followed a period of undisturbed prosperity, by which Chosroes benefited to reform the fabric of the Sassanian state. He proved to be an effective administrator, and the Persian Empire under his rule attained a degree of cultured dignity unknown since the time of Artaxerxes. Near Susa a university was founded, and a Persian school of poetry, philosophy, and rhetoric came into being. Here also the works of the most eminent Greek or Indian writers were now translated into the smooth and elegant idiom of the Sassanians. Not the least of Chosroes' innovations was the introduction of the game of chess from India, and its immediate popularization. For the rest he divided his dominion into four provinces, Assyria, Media, Persia and Bactriana, each under a Vizier; and at Ctesiphon, his winter capital, he built, or rather rebuilt on a prodigious scale, Sapor's magnificent palace, the ruins of whose main banqueting-hall remain the most familiar ancient landmark in Iraq, and still bear the name of Tak-i-Kisra, 'the arch of Chosroes'.

We have seen the beginning of Ctesiphon as a favourite camping-ground of the Parthian kings during the last centuries before Christ, on the left bank of the Tigris over against the Greek city, Seleucia. By the time of the arrival of the Sassanians it had already begun to take precedence and recommend itself as an alternative capital. Trajan, we know, sacked both cities, Lucius Verus again pillaged, and Zenobia

dared to besiege them. But it was towards Ctesiphon that Julian's campaign was directed, and one may imagine that in the two hundred and fifty years since his ignominious retreat the town had increased even more in size and importance.

In any case Chosroes' banqueting-hall remains today the widest single-span vault of un-reinforced brickwork in the world.¹⁹ Its width is over twenty-five metres, and its height from the pavement thirty-seven. It is built without temporary centring, on a principle common in later Persian buildings, which involves constructing each vertical ring of bricks leaning back upon the previous one. One can largely discount the stories of ivory columns and whole walls covered with precious metals with which tradition credits the building. What surprises the casual visitor today is the smallness of the doorways in three sides of the banqueting-hall, and the fact that the third side was apparently open to the air. One Victorian traveller's conviction, that the archway was closed by a curtain of skins, on first thought seems absurd, yet I believe that it produces the right idea. The first principle of this building should be considered in terms of tents rather than of masonry; for none who has seen the reception tent of a tribal sheik with its great, open-fronted *mudhif* in the centre, and the flanking 'family' wings with their facades of reed-walling, would deny the close parallel. It would be pointless and even inconvenient to have any sort of partition separating the business in the reception tent from the life and activities of the camp outside. To the Parthian, at least, the world of tents cannot have been such a distant memory. It is interesting to recall that the principal halls of the temple-palace at Hatra evidently had the same peculiarity. At Ctesiphon only one wing of the principal facade remains standing, the other having fallen after a serious flooding of the Tigris in 1909, and been eagerly removed by the building-contractors of Baghdad. The section which remains is in some ways a masterpiece of bad taste; a surprising example of the unimaginative application of the bare principles of copy-book Roman architecture. Still, the wall is three metres thick, and, latterly with the help of a buttress built under the direction of Gertrude Bell, has survived fifteen hundred years.

We must now return to the career of the man whose name is most generally associated by the Arabs with engineering

accomplishments of the pre-Muslim era in Mesopotamia. We find ourselves watching the inevitable signs of a renewed struggle with Rome. This brings the city called Hirah, some miles south of Kufa, to our notice for the first time; for here lived an 'Arab' chief called Al-Mundhir, whose quarrels with a tribe on the Palmyra side of the desert, on the subject of grazing rights, now led by easy stages to greater issues.

This time it was Chosroes who ascended the Euphrates and laid siege to Antioch. The city had only recently been magnificently rebuilt by Julian after another earthquake. It seemed a pity that it should be once more burnt to the ground—so Chosroes explained 'in a plaintive voice' to the Roman ambassador, as they descended together from the great breach in the mountain-wall to the smoking city below. He deplored the obstinacy of the unhappy garrison who had refused to make terms, and, having himself driven some miles northwards to the mouth of the Orontes, he sadly bathed alone in the Mediterranean.

But he was impressed by the Roman social life, which persisted in what little was left of Antioch. When he returned to Iraq, he took with him most of the surviving inhabitants and established them in a new city near Ctesiphon which he consolingly named 'The City of Chosroes, Better than Antioch'. This seemed to him a simple way of reviving in Babylonia the niceties of Western culture.

He had already filled Asia Minor with troops and had his eye on Jerusalem, when the grey but still formidable figure of Belisarius appeared once more at Nisibis.

After a false start, which ended in his being recalled to Constantinople in the middle of a successful campaign by the intrigue of his enemies and the caprice of his Emperor, the General of the East returned almost alone to defend Palestine. The troops he had so effectively trained at Dara were dead or disbanded, and he found himself, awaiting by the Euphrates the attack of the Persian host, with a mere handful of barbarian colonials. Yet even this situation was not beyond the capacity of his almost uncanny strategical flair. Persian ambassadors were invited to a preliminary parley, and during their visit to the Roman camp, unconsciously watched an artfully arranged pageant of fictitious military strength. As they approached the river they repeatedly encountered hunting-

parties of tall and robust-looking Syrians apparently unconcerned at the prospects of a battle. At the fort a thousand Armenians galloped by to the relief of others already guarding the ensign. Sitting with Belisarius in his tent, a simple affair of coarse linen suitable for a soldier who 'disdained the luxury of the East', a studied confusion of nationalities kept crossing (and probably re-crossing) the parade-ground before them; Thracians, Illyrians, Hellenes, Goths and Moors and Vandals, each in turn recalling to the Persian mind some unfamiliar or remote Roman province. Eastern ambassadors in those days were impressionable folk, and the conference amounted to a bloodless victory. Chosroes turned his attention to the northern frontiers of his Empire, and soon a pestilence necessitated a new peace treaty. Belisarius was transferred to Italy.

Meanwhile campaigns against Persia's less formidable neighbours in the east and south were consistently successful, and soon the Empire extended from Transoxiana to the Red Sea. In his palace at Ctesiphon, Chosroes received the ambassadors of the world, and a rich stream of tribute and presents poured into his treasury. From an Indian king, for instance, he condescended to accept 'a maid seven cubits in height, and a carpet softer than silk, the skin, as it was reported, of an extraordinary serpent'.

In the wilds of Tartary a new nation had meanwhile sprung up. The Turks now for the first time claimed the attention of the more civilized powers. The founder of their race was according to tradition 'suckled by a she-wolf, who afterwards made him the father of a numerous progeny'. Though still nomadic, the symptoms of a temperament destined to conquest were already apparent among them, and Chosroes found it worth while to adopt them as allies. Later, seeing the success with which this policy was rewarded, the Romans too made overtures to the Turkish chieftain of whom they had already heard such curious stories from his fugitive enemies. Ambassadors were therefore sent from Constantinople, and after some months' travelling, eventually reached his encampment. 'In a valley of the Golden Mountain they found the great khan in his tent, seated in a chair with wheels, to which a horse might be occasionally harnessed', and, after the consumption of a good deal of Tartar liquor, 'which possessed at least the intoxicating qualities of wine',²⁸ succeeded

temporarily in persuading him that friendship with Rome was even more desirable than exploitation by Persia.

Apart from such obscure contacts as these, Chosroes had no serious collision with Constantinople during the last years of his reign, which he had been devoting to imperial consolidation. It was not in fact until he was nearly eighty years old that war again broke out. We then see him unsuccessfully besieging Dara; fighting an indecisive battle in Cappadocia against a combined force of Romans and Turks; swimming the Tigris alone on the back of an elephant, in his hasty return to oppose an army which Tiberius had sent down the Euphrates; and, 'sinking indignantly into the grave', as it reaches Ctesiphon.

There is a marked deterioration, after his death, in the calibre of the Sassanian kings. Amongst his immediate successors, the second Chosroes can at least claim a twofold distinction, first in the fact that he was the first Persian Emperor to whom an alliance with Rome suggested itself as a practicable alternative to war, and secondly in his marriage to a Christian wife, Siva, whose grace and generosity, if not her constancy, were a perpetual asset.

His alliance, however, enabled him to watch at close quarters the decadence of Constantinople, while the obvious deterioration of the Roman imperial defences provided a temptation which eventually proved irresistible. When at last the time came for him to repudiate his undertakings and appear in the less incongruous role of aggressor, if it was rapid personal aggrandisement he aimed at, he was by no means disappointed; for in one fantastic campaign all the strongholds which his predecessors had severally, and generally unsuccessfully, contested now fell into his hands. Edessa, Singara, Nisibis, Dara, Mardin, and Amida capitulated in rapid succession. At Antioch, which scarcely resisted him, he divided his forces, sending half into Asia Minor and leading the remainder southwards; so that when he himself a few months later was celebrating the term of his conquests in Tripoli, his second army had almost simultaneously reached the shores of the Bosphorus.

During his progress southwards, Damascus amongst other cities had been sacked, for the first time in several hundred years. At Jerusalem, the shrine of the Holy Sepulchre was

burnt to the ground, the offerings of three centuries rifled in a day, and the True Cross carried off to Persia.

It is good that this is the last campaign of its sort in the story of Rome and Persia, for their redundance and futility become tedious.

In this case, during the period which elapsed before a Roman general could be found sufficiently enterprising to reverse the process and restore the *status quo*, Chosroes returned to Babylonia and set himself up in an atmosphere of magnificence compatible with his recent conquests. Avoiding Ctesiphon 'for superstitious reasons', he founded a new capital called Dastagerd, whose ruins are still easily recognizable on the Baquba-Khaniqin road near Shahraban. According to contemporary writers, when he had finished installing himself none of the traditional amenities of a Persian palace was lacking. He had a game preserve, like that at Ctesiphon, 960 elephants, 12,000 'great camels' and 8,000 smaller ones. From the details of his colossal stables, the actual names, Shibdiz and Barid, of two horses particularly renowned for their beauty have been preserved. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that there were 12,000 slaves including 3,000 virgins, one of whom, as Gibbon surmises, would occasionally 'console her master for the age or indifference of Siva'. Unfortunately the 'silver columns, and suspended golden globes', which are mentioned as adorning the palace, are features which the excavation today of its ruins would be absolutely certain to reveal no trace.

It was in this rich setting, amongst every manifestation of luxury and temporal power, that he received a strange and impudent message. It came from an obscure citizen of the city of Mecca, in the centre of Arabia, and suggested that he should at once acknowledge a certain Mohammed ibn Abdullah as the true Prophet of God. The fate of his empire was being as surely sealed in Mecca as Belshazzar's by the writing on the wall.

But the sevenhundred years' struggle with Rome was not yet quite complete. The Roman Emperor Heraclius had taken upon himself the colossal task of recovering the Eastern Empire, and a final struggle now began between a pair of well-matched adversaries.

Heraclius had indeed to start at the beginning, for his operations started in such remote points as Alexandretta and

the shores of the Black Sea. But his military and diplomatic versatility were remarkable. He had the good sense to use the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of the cross as an incentive to recalcitrant Christians, and a faculty for everywhere stimulating discontent with an imaginary tyrant. He seemed to his enemies to be everywhere at once and always commanding in person. A threat to the capital from the Persian army on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus produced a clever feint in the direction of Ispahan. At another moment we find him fighting a successful battle in Cilicia and pushing up through Taurus into Anatolia. Next he allied himself with the Turks, and after an incongruous scene in which the Khan prostrated himself before the purple Caesar, and was rewarded by Heraclius placing his own diadem upon his head, he obtained a promise from him to create a diversion in the eastern provinces.

Finally the moment came to march down the Tigris and fight a decisive battle. He encountered the Persian army, under Chosroes' principal general, amongst the mounds which cover the ruins of Nineveh, and defeated it. His personal exploits during the battle have probably been exaggerated by admiring historians. Here again, at all events, a horse's name is recorded, for his charger Phallas they remember with affection, and tell how, badly wounded in the leg, he carried Heraclius clear through the triple phalanx of the enemy.

Chosroes, meanwhile, had withdrawn to Dastagerd; but on hearing the result of the battle, 'escaped with Siva and three concubines through a hole in the wall' and surreptitiously transferred his little party to the greater security of Ctesiphon. When the Romans sacked his precious Dastagerd he abdicated, so obviating a more spectacular culmination of the Roman triumph.

But for Heraclius the greatest triumph was yet to come. The True Cross, which had been carefully guarded by Chosroes' pious wife, was now handed back, and he had the satisfaction of ceremonially restoring it to its shrine.

While Heraclius was occupied about this business in Jerusalem, an obscure town on the confines of Syria was pillaged by a party of fanatical Arabs, apostles of the prophet whose name Chosroes had long ago forgotten, and the ominous word *jihad*, or Holy War, was heard for the first time in the southern deserts.

CHAPTER VIII

ARABS. THE EARLY CALIPHATE

A.D. 636-750

ISLAM

Birth of the Prophet	A.D. 570
The Prophet's flight (Hijra), from which the Islamic calendar is dated	A.D. 622
Death of the Prophet	A.D. 632

THE ORTHODOX CALIPHS

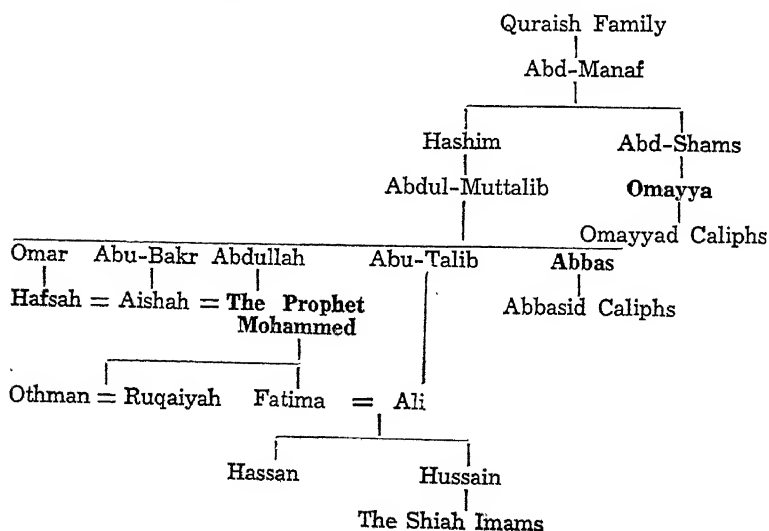
A.H.	A.D.		A.H.	A.D.	
11	632	Abu Bakr	23	644	Othman
13	634	Omar	35-40	656-61	Ali

OMAYYAD CALIPHS

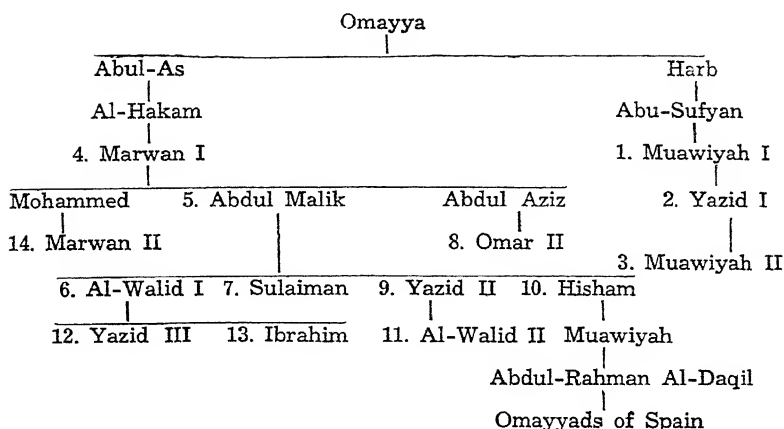
(A.H. 41-132, A.D. 661-750)

A.H.	A.D.		A.H.	A.D.	
41	661	Muawiyah I , founded Omayyad Caliphate.	65	685	Abdul-Malik
			86	705	Al-Walid I
			96	715	Sulaiman
			99	717	Omar
60	680	Yazid I , Battle of Kerbela.	101	720	Yazid II
			105	724	Hisham
64	683	Muawiyah II , sent Hajjaj to Iraq.	125	743	Al-Walid II
			126	744	Yazid III
			126	744	Ibrahim
64	683	Marwan I	127-32	744-50	Marwan II

FAMILY CONNEXIONS OF THE CALIPHS



OMAYYAD CALIPHS



DURING more than a thousand years we have now seen the domination of Iraq by a succession of foreign powers. Medes from the north and Persians from the south-east crushed the indigenous Assyrian and Babylonian kingdoms; Greeks and Romans from the west were displaced again by Persians from the east; only with the southern desert there has been no contact. The vast Arabian peninsula has remained remote and mysterious, watching with incurious detachment the titanic struggles of the powers beyond its borders. But a great change is at hand. The birth of a new ideology and the manipulative genius of its sponsor had animated the inherent fanaticism, latent till now, in the race of Arabs. The destiny of the world was already being remoulded by a group of humble burghers in an obscure Arab town.

Before turning to review the story of the foundation and meteoric growth of the Muslim religion, it is perhaps worth laying further emphasis on the surprising absence of contact up till now between Iraq and Arabia proper. Apart from the appearance in Mesopotamia, in the remote antiquity of the third millennium B.C., of Semitic elements whose origin has been inconclusively attributed to the western and southern deserts, the Arabs have so far come to our notice only on rare occasions. The fortress at Tekrit, for instance, we have already mentioned as a 'fortress of the independent Arabs'.* Hatra

* See page 119.

also had a line of its own kings who were of Arab stock. Of other principalities on the western fringe of Iraq, perhaps the most notable was the line of Lakhmid kings ruling in Hirah, whose very name, derived from a Syriac word meaning 'encampment', suggests their nomad origin. One of these, Numan, built a desert palace called Al-Khawarnaq as a health resort for a delicate son of the Sassanian king Bahram. The ruins of this building have not been located. But it has sometimes been suggested that a second similar palace, called As-Sadir, which is placed by the Arab writer Yaqut⁴³ simply in the desert between Hirah and Syria, may be identified as Al-Ukhaidir, that fantastic Arab-Byzantine stone castle which rivals Ctesiphon and Hatra as one of the most remarkable surviving ruins of Iraq.¹⁹

Yet all these alien Arab kingdoms are treated by contemporary historians as an exotic and intrusive element among the people of the country. The inhabitants of Arabia, in fact, at this time still retained a racial purity vastly superior to the complicated heredity of their neighbours in the river-land.

One may also add that extremely little was actually known about the peninsula up to this time. Herodotus' description of it, for instance, is obviously based on the most tenuous thread of reality. 'The whole of Arabia', he says, 'exhales a most delicious fragrance, being the only country which produces frankincense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon and laudanum.' He cannot resist adding that 'the trees which bear the frankincense are guarded by winged serpents, small in size and of varied colours, whereof vast numbers hang about every tree'. Otherwise small, isolated incidents only have hitherto served to bring Arabia within the focus of Mesopotamian history. The Akkadian conqueror Naram-sin added to his possessions a state called Magan, probably the modern Maan, on its western fringe. The Assyrian Shalmanesar III records having 'destroyed a thousand camels of Gindibin, the Arabian'. Apart from such traditional contacts it was till now as dark a continent as central Africa a hundred years ago. Its inhabitants had for long been vaguely classed by Greek writers as Saracens, a word derived from the Arabic stem *sharq*, and meaning simply 'men of the East'.

In this isolated and ungrateful environment the Arabian race had retained an almost unparalleled degree of ethnic

purity, evolving always those traits which later developed into clearly defined Semitic character. They had now eventually acquired the potential strength to impose themselves and their peculiar ideology on the world. Unity, only, they still required, and a leader.

The more exact political state of Arabia at the beginning of the seventh century was as follows. Yemen, the part contingent on Aden, and the southern coast of the Hadhramaut were in the possession of the Persians. The Syrian frontier valley came under the protection of the Byzantine Emperor. Otherwise the only intrusive elements in the entire peninsula were the usual colonies of ubiquitous Jewish refugees.

Actually, apart from the quaint distinction made by the Romans between 'Sandy', 'Stony', and 'Happy' Arabia, it is well to note its more real partition into a northern and a southern quarter. Yemen and Hadhramaut in the south have a sedentary, a town- and village-dwelling, population and were the first to become in any sense civilized. The north Arabians of Hejaz and Nejd were essentially nomads, to whom Islam brought the first elements of culture.³⁴

The Arabian religion in these pre-Islamic 'days of ignorance' involved none of the usual contemporary paraphernalia of priests and temples. Its abstract elements were confined to a single god, Allah, and a number of nondescript *jinn*s, or spirits. It centred already around the city of Mecca, and a sacred building in it called Kaaba. The fact that the Kaaba contained three hundred and sixty idols, including the famous black meteorite which remains sacred to this day, suggests a degraded fetishism, discarded with the advent of Islam.

With this background an Arab child was born in the Quraish tribe, whose full genealogical titles, dwelt upon in later years, were 'Mohammed ibn Abdullah ibn Abdul-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn Abd-Manaf'. Of these forbears only his grandfather features in history as a personality, since we hear of him defying the Abyssinian invaders of his country, on an occasion when even Mecca itself was invested by African Christians. Their eventual discomfiture was, according to the Koran, 'adorned with a miraculous flight of birds, who showered down stones on the heads of the infidels'.

Almost nothing is known of Mohammed's early life. It was not till after he had attained manhood that he was inspired

with a conviction of his own divine mission, and the necessity for converting the world to a new monotheism. Important in the story of his maturity are the names and characters of half-a-dozen associates and relations, which provide the principal clues to the almost chaotic sectarianism which followed his death. These appear in their correct succession in an admirably succinct little account written by Sir Denison Ross, which I cannot here do better than quote :³⁵

‘At the age of twenty-four Mohammed married Khadija, widow of a rich merchant, in whose service he had made caravan journeys into Syria, and south Arabia. By this marriage he had six children of whom we need only mention the youngest daughter Fatima. After the death of Khadija he married a young girl called Ayesha, the daughter of his friend Abu Bakr.

‘About the year A.D. 610 Mohammed, who was given to solitary wandering, one day had a dream, in which it seemed that someone said to him : “Recite in the name of thy Lord, who created man and teaches man by the pen what he does not know.” Mohammed was deeply impressed by this dream which may be regarded as the beginning of his mission. Thereafter he began to receive these dream messages with recurring frequency, and they were recorded or remembered by Mohammed as the Word of God delivered to him by the Angel Gabriel. Thus was created what has come to be known as the Koran, or “the reading”, which was only brought together after the Prophet’s death.

‘The whole of his own family, including his adopted sons Ali and Zayd and many of his intimate friends, immediately believed that Mohammed had received a divine mission. The most important of these friends was Abu Bakr, a wealthy merchant, who belonged to the sub-tribe of Tayin. The complete faith which this honourable man placed in Mohammed and his mission was not only an invaluable source of encouragement to Mohammed, but is the most important testimony to the genuineness of the Prophet’s mission.

‘In all, the first band of the Faithful are said to have numbered forty-three persons. Among them were several slaves, and mention may be made of an Ethiopian named Bilal, who, by reason of his loud voice, became the first *Muezzin* to call to prayer in Islam. . . .

‘The public feeling against the new religion often took an active form, and the Muslims were mocked and persecuted. Indeed, they were soon obliged to hold their meetings in a private house. But the turning-point in these first years was the conversion of Omar the son of Khattab, who had hitherto been one of the strongest opponents of Islam. This young man of twenty-six already commanded so much respect among his townsmen for his bravery and decision of character that from the day of his acceptance of Islam the Faithful were able to perform their prayers in public. The importance of the role played by Omar in the history of Islam cannot be overrated. It was he who spurred the Prophet on to action, and encouraged him to undertake the conversion of all Arabia. . . .

Towards the end of A.D. 619 two great misfortunes befell the Prophet. Within a few weeks he lost first his faithful Khadija, to whom he had been married for sixteen years, and then his uncle and staunch defender, Abu Talib, who enjoyed so much respect in Mecca that no one dared to attack his nephew. On the death of Abu Talib, Mohammed’s position in Mecca became one of such grave danger that he was, we are told, afraid to leave his own house. He was peremptorily ordered to give up his public preaching, and to cease from attacking the idolatry of his compatriots. In the meantime, however, during the annual pilgrimage which brought Arabs from far and near to Mecca, he had succeeded in converting a number of pilgrims to the New Faith, and notably some inhabitants of the town of Yathrib (afterwards called Al-Madinah, or The Town). With them he formed a secret alliance in A.D. 620 ; but no sooner was it noised abroad that he had thus betrayed his own home and his tribe, than further residence in Mecca became impossible for him. He therefore resolved to migrate to Yathrib, and seek the protection of its inhabitants ; but the number of converts he had succeeded in making during the pilgrimage was not sufficient to guarantee the support of the whole tribe. In A.D. 622 a secret meeting was held during the last days of the pilgrimage between the Muslims of Mecca and the envoys from Yathrib ; as a result of which the former migrated to the latter city, where they were received with open arms by the local converts. It is from this event—known as the *Hijra*—i.e. the migration or Flight of the Prophet—that the Mohammedan era dates.’

Six years after the Hijra, Mohammed was able to lead a body of fourteen hundred Believers to Mecca and exact a pact by which Meccans and Muslims should be treated on equal terms. At the same time, entering the Kaaba, he smashed the 360 idols, but spared the black meteorite, which was presumably too sacred (or just too big). The great Arabian reformation was by this time well under way.

There was really nothing strikingly new about the religion which Mohammed propounded. One must remember that he was a merchant and a townsman, and had consequently for long been in continual contact with Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians all over Arabia and Syria. Professor Hitti,³⁶ says : 'The Hebrews, before any other people, revealed to the world the clear idea of One God, and their monotheism became the origin of Christian and Muslim belief.' The religion of the Arabians, after Judaism and Christianity, is the third and latest monotheistic religion. Historically it is an offshoot of these other two ; and of all faiths it comes nearest to being their next-of-kin. All are the product of one spiritual life, the Semitic life. One must remember, for instance, that, in the Koran, mention is made of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Lot, Joseph, Moses, Saul, David, Solomon, Elijah, Job and Jonah in addition to Jesus himself.

The Prophet's real accomplishment lay in the fact that he 'called forth out of unpromising material, a nation never united before, in a country that was hitherto only a geographical expression'.

Yet it has to be admitted, in the light of the earlier history of Arabia, that the colossal expansion of the Arab world which now took place was due less to political and religious causes than to economic ones. It was hunger and want that drove the Arabs forth to world conquest. The 'human reservoir' of Arabia, which had produced, for instance, the Akkadian migration, was again ready to overflow, and this time the flood was to reach far beyond the fertile plains of Syria and Mesopotamia.

We must now return to the day in Madinah when the Prophet died. The many-sided controversy which followed, as to who should succeed him, is of vital importance to the history of Iraq, because the conflicting religious sects which

are still in evidence among Iraqi Muslims derive from this controversy.

The Prophet had left no definite instructions as to who should succeed him. Since there was no surviving son, the two most obvious candidates were Ali, his cousin and husband of his daughter, and Abu Bakr, the father of his wife Aishah. Abu Bakr was the more self-assertive character of the two, and after a sharp dispute it was he who was chosen. He remained ruler of Islam long enough to see the whole peninsula brought under one political hegemony, mainly as a result of the tireless campaigns of an Arab general Khalid-ibn-al-Walid, afterwards known as 'the Sword of God', who had first won distinction in the Prophet's lifetime.

The Arab wars of conquest were really precipitated by Persian pressure on one side and the impact of Byzantine Christians on the other. Previously these two waning powers had kept the Arabs pent up in their peninsula. But now Persia and Byzantium were locked in a death-struggle, and the way was open for the virile hosts of Islam to break out. It is wrong, as Bertram Thomas points out,³⁴ to think of them as inspired religious fanatics, like, for instance, Cromwell's Roundheads. 'They were principally raiding bands of desert warriors, whose allegiance to the new state was based primarily on self-interest. And, whatever the higher motives of the Caliphs of Madinah and the enlightened Muslims of the settlements, there can be little doubt that the desert man himself was principally inspired by the hope of plunder. . . . The possibility of permanent conquest was forced upon the Arab imagination by the very feebleness of the resistance he encountered. The Arabs marched from victory to victory, from ambition to ambition; the modest pillaging raids grew to be wars of territorial conquest, Arab sovereignty came to be the inspiration of the desert hosts.'

Khalid took with him a mere 500 men on his first raid into Iraq. Hirah on the frontier, which was now the seat of a Christian bishop, sided with the raiders, and before going much further he was recalled westwards to join a larger force, which had been harrying the Syrians. Together they returned to Transjordan, where they were further reinforced from Arabia, and, passing on into Palestine, defeated a Byzantine column near Jerusalem.

The Arabs' standard of military equipment was improving and was supplemented by their native ingenuity. Setting themselves to storm the city of Damascus, they used naphtha-throwing catapults, then swam the moat on inflated skins and flung nooses over the turrets by which to haul themselves up. Other fortified towns fell, and soon the Arab raids changed to a systematic occupation of Palestine and Syria. Thirteen hundred years later, according to Sir Henry McMahon's famous letter to the Sharif Hussain, only 'the parts of Syria which lie to the west of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo' could be distinguished from the purely Arab remainder of the Levant.

Meanwhile in Madinah Abu Bakr died, and, since he nominated his own successor, Ali was again passed over. The new Caliph, Omar ibn Khattab, received the news of Khalid's successes and watched their effect. Young Arabs swarmed out to join his forces, and the more adventurous families to settle in the newly conquered territories.

Omar visited the Arab armies in the field and cleverly conceived the idea of an 'unbeliever's exemption tax', a remunerative levy on conquered people who preferred this alternative to embracing Islam.

At about the same time, on the frontiers of Iraq, a first victory was scored over the Persians. The last notable Persian general, Rustam, was defeated by an Arab army at Qadisiyah, near Al-Hirah. It was a tremendous battle, with far-reaching results. Many stories are still told by the Arabs of single combats which took place at various stages and of the bravery of a small party of young men who succeeded in stampeding the Persian elephants. A colossal amount of loot fell into Arab hands when Rustam was killed and the Persians retreated. The great banner of the Sassanian Empire was captured on the field. 'It was made of panthers' skins, but so richly garnished with gems as to be valued at 100,000 gold pieces.' After the battle, the disintegration of the Sassanians was rapid and complete. Their harassed king, Yezdegerd, did not stay to organize the defence of Ctesiphon, and the treasures of another famous capital city fell into the hands of the Arabs.

After looting the suburbs of Seleucia on the west bank of the Tigris, it was necessary for the Arabs to make a crossing of the river in the face of heavy opposition. A deserter

showed them a place where fording was sometimes possible, and the famous Persian convert, Salman Pak, led the cavalry into the water.* Horses and mares were sent in to cross simultaneously, so that they might more readily follow one another; and all gained the further side without loss. According to Muslim tradition, 'one drinking jug was carried away by the tide, but that was recovered'. The Persians fled and, as company after company scrambled up the east bank, they gazed in astonishment at the famous palace, with its great hall of white marble rising above the town. Soon they were wandering among the gorgeous pavilions of a court into which for ages the East had poured its treasures. Gibbon pictures how 'the Arabs were suddenly enriched beyond the measure of their hope or knowledge. Each chamber revealed a new treasure, secreted with art or ostentatiously displayed; the gold and silver, the various wardrobes and precious furniture, surpassed the estimate of fancy or numbers. One of the apartments of the palace was decorated with a carpet of silk, sixty cubits in length and as many in breadth; a paradise or garden was pictured on the ground; the flowers, plants and shrubs were imitated by the figures of the gold embroidery and the colours of the precious stones; and the ample square was circled by a variegated and verdant border. The Arabian general persuaded his soldiers to relinquish their claim, in the hope that the eyes of the Caliph would be delighted with the splendid workmanship of nature and industry. Regardless of the merit of art and the pomp of royalty, the rigid Omar divided the prize among his brethren of Madinah; the picture was destroyed; but such was the intrinsic value of the materials that the share of Ali alone was sold for twenty thousand drachms'.†

The great hall was at once adapted for divine worship, and here the Friday ritual of the Muslim religion was celebrated for the first time in Iraq.

After the fall of Ctesiphon, Nihavend and Persepolis, Ispahan and Hamadan were easy stages in the subjugation

* It was Salman who virtually invented trench-warfare when, in the Prophet's lifetime, he suggested this method of defending Madinah. It is his tomb which gives its name to the modern village adjoining the arch at Ctesiphon. His finely carved wooden sarcophagus has been placed for safety in the Arab Museum in Baghdad.

† It is doubtful whether this story can be considered compatible with the character of the orthodox Caliphs.

of all Persia, and soon a significant change began to be noticeable in Islamic policy. Dependence on Madinah quickly diminished, and the Arabian empire became a decentralized conception. Yet Persia itself was never effectively arabicized. In fact the subsequent relationship between Arab and Persian is most accurately suggested by Dr Hogarth³⁷ when he says : 'Never has captor more swiftly and subtly been captured by his captive.' By the time the Abbasid Caliphs were established in Baghdad, Persian culture had made such a deep impression that at the Arab court everything Persian was fashionable, from poetry down to dress and behaviour.

There is no need here to follow in detail the early stages in the Muslim expansion westwards. We can only in passing admire the temerity of the Arab general, Amr, who set out to conquer Egypt with only 4,000 men, and when the Emperor Heraclius died in Constantinople, concluded a favorable peace with the Christian governor of Egypt, whereby the city of Alexandria was handed over. We must rather return to Madinah, where the Caliph Omar had been murdered, and a large section of the faithful, discontented with the maladministration of his successor, Othman, were intriguing in favour of the claims of the much-neglected Ali. As a result it was not long before Othman in his turn was assassinated and Ali was at last proclaimed Caliph. Unfortunately this proved a fatal blow to the Madinah Caliphate, for in the confusion of loyalties which followed, Muawiyah created an opposition party which refused to acknowledge the new Caliph, and Ali was compelled to take refuge in Iraq. For a hundred years afterwards Syria was in the ascendancy with its line of Omayyad Caliphs, and the focus of the Muslim world did not shift to Iraq until the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad. Meanwhile Madinah was the seat of no temporal or spiritual authority and its treasuries were empty. From these rivalries arose the two great subdivisions of the Muslim world, which later came to be called the Sunni in Syria and the Shiah in Iraq.

Ali's flight to Iraq was complicated by the fact that his old enemy, Aishah, the Prophet's wife, had got there first, determined to persuade the Iraqis to give him a hot reception. She succeeded in persuading them into raising a force to oppose him, and there was a battle, which is famous in Islamic

history as the 'Day of the Camel'. Arab tradition tells how the 'Mother of the Faithful' rode her camel in and out among the front ranks of her men cheering and encouraging them. 'In the heat of the action, seventy men who held the bridle of her camel were successively killed; and the litter on which she sat was stuck with javelins and darts like the quills of a porcupine.'

But the battle apparently went in Ali's favour, for afterwards he advanced up the Euphrates to meet Muawiyah, who was also determined to prevent his remaining in Iraq. Another extraordinary encounter took place. Muawiyah's forces advanced into battle with copies of the Koran tied to their lances. This proved so awe-inspiring a sight for the equally devout Muslims supporting Ali that there was no alternative to a truce. It was arranged that some sort of arbitration should take place on the Iraq-Syrian frontier a year later, and meanwhile Ali's troops returned dejectedly to Kufa. In the end he somehow contrived to be only ineffectually represented at the arbitration. Muawiyah assumed the dispute to be concluded in his own favour and had himself elected Caliph in Jerusalem, thus initiating the Omayyad dynasty. Soon afterwards Ali's tragic life was ended by an assassin at the door of the Kufa mosque.

Unhappily the sad saga of the Hashimite family does not end there. The crescendo of tragedy in the Shiah tradition is reached only with the death of Ali's son, Hussain, at the battle of Kerbela.

Hussain's elder brother, Hassan, who was really Ali's successor as pretender to the Caliphate, had meekly agreed to abdicate and return to Madinah, where he also was murdered by one of his wives eight years later. But Hussain, whose ambition was stronger, was lured by promises of support from discontented factions in Iraq into returning to the Euphrates to lead them against Muawiyah's successor Yazid. He had been falsely informed of the amount of support he could expect, and, before he reached Kufa, encountered a force of four thousand of Yazid's men. The horror of what followed has formed the basis of the great passion-play of the East, which arouses Shiah communities all over the Muslim world to religious frenzy every year on the tenth day of the month of Muharram. Hussain and his followers were almost

surrounded and entirely outnumbered, yet he could still have escaped and returned to Madinah had not a passionate belief in his own cause driven him on. In the night which preceded the battle, his little band went to the dramatic length of digging a trench behind them and filling it with burning faggots to cut off their own retreat. Next morning, with his sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, Hussain led forward his martyrs to certain death. Yazid's men had to do little more than stand away and concentrate a shower of arrows on the party, who fell one after another, until only Hussain was left alive. He himself could well have been spared, but this was not the order of the day. Thirty-three Omayyad supporters contributed a sword- or lance-thrust to his murder. His body was trampled on and the head removed and taken to Kufa. It is said that the governor of Kufa, to whom it was presented, saw fit to strike it across the mouth with his cane, and in the awful silence which followed an old man cried out, 'Gently! Alas! For on those lips I have seen the lips of the Prophet of God.'

The surviving members of Ali's family were released by Yazid and allowed to return to Mecca. Their descendants are still held in great respect. But the so-called Imams, Ali, Hassan, Hussain and their nine lineal descendants, are revered by the Shiah as the only true Caliphs. Their tombs on the Euphrates and in Khorasan are fine specimens of Persian art, and each is a Mecca for the annual Shiah pilgrimage. In Iraq the mosque of Nejef represents the tomb of Ali and that of Kerbela the resting-place of Hussain.

It is in many ways tragic that the beauty of these two mosques is for ever hidden from all but Muslims' eyes. Gertrude Bell was one European who felt this strongly. On a visit to Kerbela she was much moved by the glimpse of the gorgeously tiled courtyard which she obtained from the roof of a neighbouring house. She says : ³⁸ 'It was not the golden dome of Hussain, though it covers the richest treasure of offerings possessed by any known shrine (unless the treasure of Ali's tomb at Nejef touch yet higher value), that made the strongest assault on the imagination. It was the sense of having reached those regions which saw the founding of Imperial Islam, regions which remained for many centuries the seat of the paramount ruler, the "Commander of the Faithful". Within

the compass of two days' journey, lay the battlefield of Qadisiyah, where Khalid-ibn-al-Walid overthrew at once and for ever the Sassanian power. Chosroes with his hosts, his satraps, his Arab allies—those princes of the house of Mundhir whose capital was one of the first cradles of Arab culture—slipped back at his coming into the shadowy past; their cities and palaces disappeared, Al-Hirah, Khawarnaq, Ctesiphon and many others of which the very sites are forgotten; all the pomp and valour of an earlier time fell together like an army of dreams at the first trumpet-blast of those armies of the Faith which hold the field until this hour. Then came the day of vigour; the adding of dominion to dominion; the building of great Mohammedan towns, Kufa, Wasit, Basrah, and last of all Baghdad, last and greatest.'

Remembering with pleasure every detail of the scene, Miss Bell concludes: 'The low sun shone upon the golden dome; the nesting storks held conversations from minaret to minaret, with much clapping of beaks and shaking out of ruffled wings; the spirit of Islam marched out of the wilderness and seized the fruitful earth.'*

Before leaving the Shiah saga, it is important to mention the tradition of the Twelfth Imam. This last descendant of Ali is considered never to have died. His temporary disappearance took place in a cave at Samarra, whence he is expected to return as the 'Mahdi' in order to denounce an anti-Christ. It will be remembered that it was he who was impersonated in the Sudan at the beginning of the century, with disconcerting results for the British military authorities. A mosque has been built over the Mahdi's cave, around which stands the diminutive modern city of Samarra. The so-called 'Doorway of Disparition', a passable piece of fourteenth-century Islamic carving, has recently received some much-needed repairs at the hands of the Department of Antiquities.³⁹

We must now return to Yazid, the successor of Muawiyah, who was largely responsible for the tragedy of Kerbela. Even after the Hashimite brothers were dead, their cause continued to be supported in the Hejaz by Abdullah, a nephew

*It is thirty years since those lines were written, and today I have been helping to plan two small museums at Kerbela and Nejef to house some of the treasures which Miss Bell mentioned, so that the beauty of these at least may eventually be shared by the Shiah with non-Moslems.

of Aishah. Yazid was soon compelled to send an army against these malcontents. Madinah was sacked, and Yazid's troops proceeded to Mecca, which they besieged. Their catapults were even directed against the holy mosque, and the Kaaba itself caught fire and was burnt to the ground, the sacred black stone being split in three pieces. The Arab writer At-Tabari, using a simile perhaps more conventional in his time than now, laments that 'the House of Allah looked like the torn bosoms of a mourning woman'.

Meanwhile Yazid had died and been succeeded by his son Muawiyah, who had a short and ineffectual reign. Another branch of the Omayyad family then founded a new dynasty. The aged Marwan, after whom it was named, also bequeathed the Caliphate to his son, Abdul Malik. This young man almost at once found it necessary to send yet another army against the still-dissident people of Mecca, and he chose as his commander a character who now appears on the scene for the first time, but is later destined to loom large in the early history of the Iraqi state. This was Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, a one-time Hejazi schoolmaster, but now a general with a reputation for iron-handed discipline. Hajjaj took Mecca after a siege of six months, and slew the principal pretender to the Caliphate, Ibn Al-Zubair. This was the end of the Holy Cities of the Hejaz, as far as temporal aspirations were concerned. They did not again presume to dispute the authority of Damascus, nor later of Baghdad. Henceforward the history of Arabia 'begins to deal more with the effect of the outer world on the peninsula, and less with the effect of the peninsula on the outside world. The vigour of the mother "island" had spent itself'.

Hajjaj, who was now made governor of Arabia, took two years to bring under control and pacify the Hejaz and Yemen. He was then called upon to do the same in Iraq. It was considered that he would find this no easy task, for the Iraqis of that time were what the Arab writer Yaqubi describes as 'men of schism and hypocrisy'. The Omayyad authority was still receiving strong opposition both from the Shiah supporters of the martyred Hashimites and from the fanatical Kharijite sect. Hajjaj's method of approach was typical of his subsequent conduct, and has captured the imagination of many later generations of Arabs. He arrived at Kufa dis-

guised by a heavy turban, and accompanied only by a party of twelve cameleers. He at once entered the great mosque where the whole town was assembled for prayers, and mounted the pulpit. His address began with a quotation from a classical poet :

‘I am he who scattereth darkness, and climbeth lofty summits.
As I lift the turban from my face ye shall know me.’

Uncovering his face, he cast his eye over the congregation and continued : ‘O people of Kufa, certain am I that I see heads ripe for cutting, and verily I am the man to do it. Methinks I see blood between the turbans and the beards!’ Writers of the Abbasid period who were no doubt prejudiced against an Omayyad governor of the previous regime, declare that 120,000 Iraqis were victims of his tyranny, and attribute to his character a high degree of impiety and even gluttony. But it is at least certain that with the help of his faithful Syrian bodyguards he accomplished all that Abdul Malik sent him to Iraq to do.

It is not necessary to observe in detail the fortunes of all the subsequent Omayyad Caliphs. The last one with any pretensions to statesmanship was Abdul Malik’s fourth son Hisham. His own son in turn was killed in a hunting accident, and the chapter ends with the father’s disillusioned comment, which is still sometimes quoted : ‘I brought him up for the Caliphate and he pursues a fox!’ The governor of Iraq in Hisham’s time was convicted of misappropriating thirteen million dirhams out of the public funds, and this may be considered as symptomatic of the corruption in the body politic at the tail-end of the Omayyad dynasty, which eventually rendered it an easy prey to its Abbasid rivals.

These Abbasids were the descendants of Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, and were of the Hashimite branch of the Quraish tribe. The process by which they rose to power, increasing and organizing their supporters until they were able to destroy the authority of Damascus and assume control of the Arab world, has been described as ‘the earliest and most subtle propaganda movement in political Islam’. It was Abbas’ great-great-grandson, Abu-l-Abbas, who eventually headed an open insurrection. He seized Kufa and was there enthroned as Caliph, with a bodyguard drawn from his

numerous Persian supporters. Kufa became the first Abbasid capital of Iraq, but to begin with its government also consisted largely of Persians. With the help of these, Abu-l-Abbas set about the systematic extermination of those still faithful to the Omayyads.

It is not, as has already been said, within the scope of a history of Iraq to follow step by step the geographical expansion of the Muslim world during this period or the consolidation of the Arabian Empire. But in assessing the accomplishments of the Omayyad age we should first realize just how far the Arabs had been carried by their wars of conquest. In 732 A.D., when the Arab armies in France were checked between Tours and Poitiers by Charles Martel, the Arab dominions exceeded in extent even the Roman Empire at the height of its prosperity. The Prophet had barely been dead a hundred years, yet his followers had already carried his banner over lands stretching from the Bay of Biscay to the Indus, and the confines of China; from the Aral Sea to the cataracts of the Nile. Five times a day his name, coupled with that of Allah, was called from a thousand minarets throughout half the civilized world. At the centre of all this, the city of Damascus, which Mohammed had once hesitated to approach on the plea that he wished only to enter paradise once, was now a worthy setting for the glittering palace of the Caliphs and the great Omayyad mosque.

Since this earliest phase in the evolution of Arab culture is a subject which has aroused very special interest and some controversy during recent years, I propose to quote largely from the most up-to-date, reliable and conscientious work available, namely Professor Hitti's *History of the Arabs*.³⁶ He says: 'The invaders from the desert brought with them no tradition of learning, no heritage of culture, to the lands they conquered. In Syria, in Egypt, in Al Iraq, in Persia they sat as pupils at the feet of the people they subdued. . . . But the seed was then sown, and the tree of knowledge, which came into full bloom under the early Abbasids in Baghdad, certainly had its roots in the preceding period of Greek, Syrian and Persian culture.' Professor Hitti then refers to the inter-marriage which had begun to take place between the Arabs and the peoples they had conquered, and points out how the old distinction between Arab and non-Arab was beginning

to disappear. No matter what his nationality may have been originally, the follower of Mohammed now passed for an Arab. An Arab was one who professed Islam and spoke and wrote Arabic. He says : ' When we speak of Arab philosophy, Arab medicine, Arab mathematics, we do not mean the medical science, philosophy or mathematics that are necessarily the product of the Arabian mind, or developed by people living in the Arabian peninsula, but that body of knowledge enshrined in books written in the Arabic language by men who flourished mainly during the Caliphate, and were themselves Persians, Syrians, Egyptians or Arabians, Christian, Jewish or Moslem. . . . '

In regard to architecture in particular, Professor Hitti says : ' If there was an indigenous Arab architecture, it would have existed only in Al Yaman, concerning which our present state of investigation and exploration is as yet unable to afford sufficient data. Even then, south Arabian art would not have played much part in the northern life of the peninsula. Here the tent was the ordinary dwelling, the open air the temple and the desert sand the tomb.' Even the Kaaba itself at the time of Mohammed was a primitive cube-like structure with no roof, ' the work of a Coptic carpenter '. Yet the youthful vitality and peculiar synthetic intelligence of the new Muslim people did not take long in devising a style of their own. Though at first purely eclectic, it soon began to show signs of a standardized taste in proportion, detail and colour. Almost its first expression was in a series of pleasure-palaces, both on the eastern and western fringes of the Arabian desert, in the one case conveniently near the great religious centre of Kufa, and in the other on the road from Damascus to the Hejaz. Several of these have recently been newly investigated and recorded, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the origins of the fully developed Islamic art. Al-Ukhaidir, for instance, the colossal fortified mansion in the desert southwest of Kerbela, should now be attributed to this or to the very early Abbasid period. Architecturally almost the first thing which strikes one's eye in this building is a Persian *iwān*, or open-fronted hall, with its archway framed in a *pishtaq*, the tall, rectangular panel always associated with Iranian facades. Elsewhere there are fallen capitals, carved in stone with the characteristic Byzantine acanthus leaves.

Yet the whole building, with its circular buttresses and vaulted colonnades, is neither Greek nor Persian, but the first, perhaps over-bold step in the evolution of an individual style, which later produced the Caliph's palace at Samarra and the Ibn-Tulun mosque in Cairo.

To the west of the desert, there is Yazid's pleasure-palace between Palmyra and Damascus, and in Transjordan, to the east of the Dead Sea, an architectural gem called Al-Qusair, 'the Little Palace'. Ever since the Prophet himself had expressed his disapproval of painters, the representation of men and animals had been considered as the prerogative of God alone, and generally avoided in architectural decoration. It is therefore probable that the beautiful frescoes which adorn the walls of Qusair are the work of Christian artists. There are pictures of kings and princes, symbolic figures and naked dancers or merry-makers, all woven into a scheme of decoration in which, curiously enough, can already be seen the elements of typical Islamic decoration, later executed in carved stone or moulded plaster.

Buildings for Muslim worship were first modelled on the simple mosque of Mohammed at Madinah. The first element was hardly more than an open courtyard, surrounded by mud-brick walls. Later, as a protection from the sun, this was partially covered with a roof of palm fronds, supported on palm-trunk columns. To this it was only necessary to add a *mihrab*-niche in one wall to establish the orientation, and a *minbar*, or pulpit, which was already a familiar feature of Christian churches, to complete the elements of the standard mosque. The minaret was to begin with merely a point of vantage from which the call to prayer was made. When it became an architectural feature, it took various forms according to precedents in the country where the mosque was built. In Syria for instance the model of a square stone watch-tower was first used, whereas in the case of the great mosque at Samarra the shape of minaret was suggested by the spiral form of Babylonian *ziggurats*.

These random examples of early Arab buildings are only cited in order to emphasize again the eclectic character of early Muslim art in its origin, motifs and execution. As Professor Hitti says, it was 'mostly the product of the artistic genius of the subjugated peoples, but developed under Muslim

auspices, and peculiarly adapted to the demands of the Muslim religion'.

In Iraq itself there are few remains of the Omayyad period. The ruins of the early mosques of Kufa and Basrah have never been fully investigated. Hajjaj's great mosque at his capital, Wasit on the lower Tigris, has been excavated and planned by the Iraq Department of Antiquities, and some trace has been found of the palace adjoining it. Such traces have not been found at the Omayyad mosque in Damascus. Elsewhere remains of early Muslim shrines have been replaced by or incorporated in the more pretentious buildings of the later Abbasids.

ARABS. THE ABBASID CALIPHS

ABBASID CALIPHS
(A.H. 132-656 A.D. 750-1258)

(A.D. 932-1055)

A.H.	A.D.		A.H.	A.D.	
132	750	Saffah (A b u-l- Abbas), extermin- ated the Omay- yads	320	932	Muizz-ud-Daulah- Abdul-Hussain- Ahmad
136	754	Mansur , founder of Baghdad	356	967	Izz-ud-Daulah- Bakhtyar
158	775	Mahdi and Hadi	367	977	Adud-ud-Daulah (of Fars)
170	786	Harun Al-Rashid , <i>The Thousand Nights and a Night</i>	372	982	Sharaf-ud-Daulah (of Fars)
193	806	Amin , slain by Mamun	379	989	Baha-ud-Daulah- abu-Nasr-Firuz
198	813	Mamun , moved the capital to Samarra	403	1012	Sultan-ud-Daulah (of Fars)
218	833	Mutasim	411	1020	Musharrif-ud- Daulah
227	842	Wathiq	416	1025	Jalal-ud-Daulah
232	847	Mutawakkil , built northern part of Samarra	435	1043	Imad-ud-Din (of Fars)
247	861	Muntasir	440-7	1048-55	Abu-Nasr Khusru Firuz (of Fars)
248	862	Mustaim			
251	866	Mutazz			
255	869	Muhtadi			
256	870	Mutamid-Muwaffaq			
279	892	Mutadhid , aban- doned Samarra	429	1037	Toghrul Beg
289	902	Muktafi	455	1063	Alp Arslan
295	908	Muqtadir . Ahmad Buwayh raised to power	465	1072	Malik Shah I
			485	1092	Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud
320	932	Qahir -----	487	1094	Bargiyaruk
322	934	Radhi	498	1104	Malik Shah II
329	940	Muttaqi	498	1104	Mohammed
333	944	Mustakfi			
334	946	Muti			
363	946	Tai			
381	991	Qadir	511	1117	Mughith-ud-Din Mahmud
422	1031	Kaim	525	1131	Ghiyath-ud-Din- Daud
467	1075	Muqtadi	526	1132	Toghrul I
487	1094	Mustadhir	527	1133	Ghiyath-ud-Din Masud
512	1118	Mustarshid	547	1152	Muin-ud-Din Malik Shah
529	1135	Rashid	548	1153	Mohammed
530	1136	Muqtafi	554	1159	Sulaiman Shah
555	1160	Mustanjid			
566	1170	Mustadhi			
575	1180	Nasir , built the Talisman Gate			

ABBASID CALIPHS			SELJUKS OF IRAQ AND KURDISTAN		
A.H.	A.D.		A.H.	A.D.	
622	1225	Dhahir	556	1161	Arslan Shah
623	1226	Mustansir, first Mongol threat	573-90	1177-94	Togrul II
640-56	1242-58	Mustasim, sack of Baghdad by the Mongols.	GOVERNORS OR ATABEGS OF MOSUL CONTEMPORARY WITH THE LATER ABBASIDS		
			(A.H. 521-631 A.D. 1127-1234)		
			A.H.	A.D.	
			521	1127	Imad-ud-Din Zangi
			541	1146	Saif-ud-Din Ghazi I
			544	1149	Qutb-ud-Din Maudud
			565	1169	Sauf-ud-Din Ghazi II
			576	1180	Izz-ud-Din Masud I
			589	1193	Nur-ud-Din Arslan Shah I
			607	1210	Izz-ud-Din Masud II
			615	1218	Nur-ud-Din Arslan Shah II
			616	1219	Nasr-ud-Din Mahmud
			631	1233	Badr-ud-Din Lulu
			657-60	1259-62	Ismail Lulu

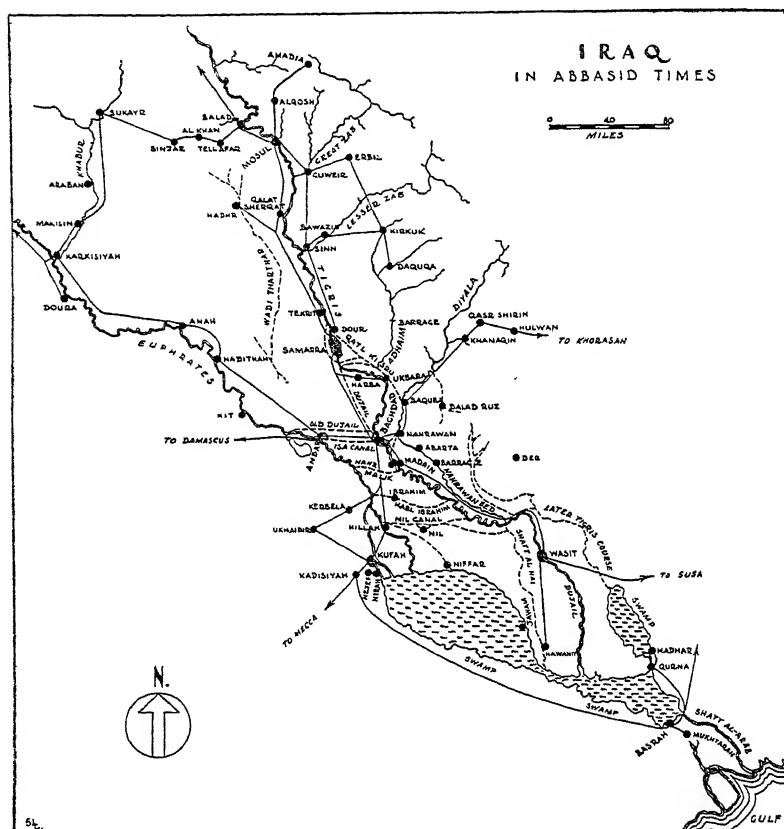
ONCE Abu-l-Abbas was established as Caliph in Kufa he found no difficulty in living up to his sobriquet Saffah, 'the blood-shedder'. He did in fact succeed in exterminating all the remaining Omayyads, except one who escaped and founded an Omayyad dynasty in Spain. Basrah, the sister-city of Kufa, held out against him for eleven months, and he himself did not long survive its fall. He died of smallpox in his early thirties and was succeeded by his brother Mansur.

Mansur was one of the greatest of the Abbasids, and the thirty-five Caliphs who came after him were all his lineal descendants. He had a real talent for statesmanship and organization, and an intelligent appreciation of the revisions now essential in Islamic imperial policy. He made it his business to eliminate as much as possible the privilege which had till now been associated with pure Arab blood, and gave equal rights to the Gentile or neo-Muslims of the conquered countries. At the same time, in order to give new emphasis to the theocratic character of the empire, and the importance of loyalty to the faith, he elected to sanctify his own person,

or rather the person of the Caliph, as the central symbol of religious unity. In contrast to the democratic behaviour of the Omayyads at their Damascus court, Mansur became unapproachable by his people, wrapt in the inaccessible mystery of religious sanctity. This involved some constitutional reform, and resulted, for one thing, in the institution of a *wazir* or minister of state, whose duty was the interpretation of the Caliph's wishes to the people, and upon whom, in consequence, very heavy responsibilities devolved. The first *wazir*, Khalid the Barmecide, was actually the son of a Zoroastrian priest captured in war, but had been such a close friend of the previous Caliph that their wives used to suckle one another's children. He was made minister as a result of his competence both as a soldier and as manager of the national finance, and he founded an illustrious family. One novel aspect of the Abbasid Caliphate was that its jurisdiction was not coterminous with Islam. Spain and North Africa did not acknowledge Mansur, while Egypt only did so nominally. Mansur made up for this by raiding beyond the conquests of his predecessors into Caucasia and the remote parts of Asia. He even reached Baku and levied a tax on the naphtha springs there, so that Iraq's first 'royalties' of this sort came from what are now the Russian oilfields.

Abu-l-Abbas had built himself a residence at Anbar above Fallujah on the Euphrates, but its situation did not meet with Mansur's approval, and he determined to create an entirely new capital city on a scale more appropriate to his majesty and wealth. After lengthy consultations with his advisers, and later with peasants living in the locality, he eventually selected as his site Baghdad, a Sassanian village at a bend in the Tigris, on the west bank, a little to the south of modern Kadhimain. In the spring of the year 762 A.D., with Sagittarius rising, he watched the lines of his new capital traced out with burnt cotton rags. When it was finished he spoke as follows: 'In the name of the most merciful God. Praise belongeth unto him, and the earth is his. He causeth such of his servants as he pleaseth to inherit the same. Success attend the pious; now with the blessing of God, build on!' ⁴⁰ So began the saga of Madinat-as-Salaam, the City of Peace—setting of the legendary adventures immortalized by Sheherazad in the *Thousand Nights and a Night*.⁴¹

Mansur took four years to build his city. He spent 4,883,000 dirhams and employed about 100,000 architects, craftsmen and labourers, drawn from all over the empire. Professor Hitti summarizes the description of it given by Yaqut and other Arab writers as follows: ³⁶ 'It was circular in form with



double brick walls, a deep moat and a third innermost wall rising ninety feet and surrounding the central area. The walls had four equivalent gates from which four highways, starting from the centre of the circle, radiated like the spokes of a wheel to the four corners of the empire. The whole thus formed concentric circles with the Caliphal Palace, styled the "Golden Gate", on account of its gilded entrance, or the "Green Dome", as the hub. Beside the palace stood the

great Mosque. The dome of the audience chamber, after which the imperial palace was named, rose to a height of a hundred and thirty feet. Later tradition topped it with the figure of a mounted man carrying a lance, which in time of danger pointed in the direction from which the enemy might be expected. . . . The adjacent ruins of the Sassanid palace, Ctesiphon, served as the main quarry for the new city and furnished the necessary building material, while brick was also made on the spot. . . . As if called into existence by a magician's wand, this city of Al Mansur, full heir to the power and prestige of Ctesiphon, Babylon, Nineveh, Ur and other capitals of the ancient orient, attained a degree of prestige and splendour unrivalled in the middle ages, except perhaps by Constantinople, and after many vicissitudes was recently resuscitated as the capital of the new Iraqi kingdom under a truly Arabian king, Faysal.' But for the moment everything Persian was fashionable. 'Gradually, Persian titles, Persian wines and wives, Persian mistresses, Persian songs as well as Persian ideas and thoughts won the day. . . . Persian influence, it should be noted, softened the rough edges of the primitive Arabian life and paved the way for a new era, distinguished by the cultivation of science and scholarly pursuits. In two fields only did the Arabian hold his own: Islam remained the religion of the state, and Arabic continued to be the official language of the state registers.'

To return to the actual structure of the city, its walls were built of eighteen-inch cubical mud-bricks, weighing about two hundred pounds apiece, and bonded together with bundles of reeds. The whole work had one principal overseer, Abu Hanifah, whose tomb has survived at Adhamiyah. It was perhaps he who first thought of stripping some of the other great cities of Islam of their finery, in order to adorn the new capital. In any case it is known that Wasit, for instance, surrendered five of its famous wrought-iron gates, while Kufa and Damascus each sacrificed a portal. Mansur discouraged the establishment of bazaars inside the city, and these therefore soon began to accumulate outside the 'Basrah Gate'. Thus originated the extensive merchants' quarter of Karkh. Outside the north-eastern gate, a bridge of boats carried the Khorasan road across the Tigris, and beyond this Mansur built a palace for the heir-apparent, Mahdi. The suburb which

grew up around it was the earliest forerunner of modern Baghdad, which lies principally on the east bank of the river. Two new cemeteries were inaugurated, one on the site of an old Zoroastrian burial-ground, now known as Adhamiyah, and another north of the Round City where the mosque of Kadhimain today surmounts the tombs of two of the twelve Imams. Mansur himself died a few years after the completion of the city, but, in order that no enemy should ever find and desecrate his tomb, a hundred graves were dug for him, and he was secretly interred in another.

Mansur had entrusted the education of his grandson, Harun, to Yahya, son of Khalid the Barmecide, and when, after the short reigns of his father Mahdi and his brother Hadi, Harun succeeded to the caliphate, he appointed Yahya, whom he still respectfully called 'father', as *wazir*. When Yahya died, his sons Fadhl and Jafar practically ruled the empire. With the rapid and prodigious increase in the wealth of the Barmecide family, Jafar acquired a great reputation for elegance, as well as generosity. His long neck is supposed to have given rise to the contemporary fashion for wearing high collars. The sudden fall of the Barmecide family into disfavour has never been entirely satisfactorily explained, but it is presumed that it was the outcome of Arab-Persian intrigue and jealousy. Jafar's fate was sudden and sensational, for while the rest of the family were merely flung into prison, he himself was decapitated and various portions of him exhibited to the public in the more frequented parts of Baghdad. The family property which Harun confiscated is said to have been worth 36,676,000 dinars. Yet even Harun Al-Rashid apparently had moments of remorse, for, on one occasion, when a courtier was seeking to ingratiate himself by reviling the Barmecide's memory, he pulled him up short with the advice, 'Blame them less or fill the gap that they have left'.

It is not altogether easy to give a fair appraisal of Harun's glory and the magnificence of the empire during the golden prime of the Abbasid Caliphate. So many writers have concentrated on the fabulous wealth and luxury of Baghdad and the sybaritic life of its citizens that one is inclined to form a picture resembling more closely Versailles in the middle of the eighteenth century than, for instance, Rome during the Augustan age.⁴¹ Yet one cannot help being impressed

by such stories as that of Harun, while visiting a remote city in central Asia, making payment for a small bill with a draft on Baghdad. Again, it was at a village on the upper Euphrates, where he was forced by the weather to seek shelter in a peasant's hut. The peasant's bill for lodging his retinue was five hundred dirhams. Harun gave him a warrant on the treasury, written with charcoal and sealed with mud. The Caliph unintentionally made it out for five hundred thousand, and insisted on paying the full amount when it was presented. Whether or not these somewhat trivial incidents can be taken to suggest financial integrity in the empire, it can at least be said with conviction that from a military point of view Harun's prowess commanded far-reaching respect. Though he had little contact with his Omayyad rivals in Europe, the Byzantine state, hereditary enemy of Islam, was forced to sign an ignominious treaty, and Irene, the Regent Princess of Constantinople, paid a heavy tribute to Baghdad. His great contemporary, Charlemagne, felt it advisable to send ambassadors to Harun's court, and they returned with suitably magnificent presents (including an elephant and 'a water-clock, which was considered one of the marvels of the age').

Meanwhile the splendour of Baghdad 'kept pace with the prosperity of the empire of which it was the capital'.⁴⁰ There can be little doubt that it reached the peak of its magnificence in the time of Harun, who historically stands in relation to his grandfather Mansur very much as Henry VIII to Henry VII. Yet it hardly diminished under his successors. Harun's wife Zobeida shares in tradition some of his glory. She would not permit at her table any vessels that were not of gold or silver or studded with gems. Before she went on the pilgrimage, three million dinars were spent on the preparatory refurnishing of Mecca. All through the reigns of the Caliphs who followed Harun, ceremonial occasions in particular called forth the same lavish display. The marriage ceremony of Harun's son Mamun 'was celebrated in 825 with such fabulous expenditure of money, that it has lived in Arab literature as one of the unforgettable extravaganzas of the age. At the nuptials, a thousand pearls of unique size, we are told, were showered from a golden tray upon the couple, who stood on a golden mat. Balls of musk, each containing a ticket signifying the gift of some slave or rich estate, were showered on

the royal princes and dignitaries'. When the Caliph Muqtadir received the envoys of a Byzantine Emperor, 'the Caliphal army included 160,000 cavalry and footmen, 7,000 black and white eunuchs and 700 chamberlains. In the parade, a hundred lions marched, and in the Caliphal palace hung 38,000 curtains, of which 12,500 were gilded, besides 22,000 rugs. The envoys were so struck with awe and admiration that they first mistook the chamberlain's office and then the vizir's for the royal audience chamber. Especially impressed were they with the Hall of the Tree, which housed an artificial tree of gold and silver weighing 500,000 drachms, in the branches of which were lodged birds of the same precious metals so constructed that they chirped by artificial devices. In the garden they marvelled at the artificially dwarfed palm trees, which, by skilled cultivation, yielded dates of rare varieties'.⁸⁶

One of the most remarkable characters who came to prominence during Harun's reign was his boon companion, the buffoon-poet Abu Nuwas. He left behind many unforgettable word-pictures of court life in his time. There is a story that, after his death, Harun's son, Amin, in a fit of sentimentality rewarded a professional singer with 300,000 dinars for chanting a few verses from one of these. Amin also had a passion for arranging eccentric spectacles. During one of his water-parties, five royal gondolas sailed up the Tigris, shaped respectively like a horse, an elephant, an eagle, a serpent and a lion. He also showed a distinctly modern taste for ballet.

Here, then, was Baghdad in its prime. 'Along its miles of wharves lay hundreds of vessels, including ships of war and pleasure-craft varying from Chinese junks to native rafts of inflated sheepskins. Into the bazaars of the city came porcelain, silk and musk from China; spices, minerals and dyes from India and the Malay Archipelago; rubies, lapis lazuli, fabrics and slaves from the lands of the Turks in Central Asia; honey, wax, furs and white slaves from Scandinavia and Russia; ivory, gold-dust and black slaves from eastern Africa.' The empire itself supplied 'rice, grain and linen from Egypt; glass, metal-ware and fruits from Syria; brocade, pearls and weapons from Arabia; silk, perfumes and vegetables from Persia'. In exchange, Baghdad shipped her own products to

the Far East, Europe and Africa. 'The adventures of Sindbad the sailor, which form one of the best-known tales in *The Thousand Nights and a Night*, have long been recognized as based upon actual reports of voyages made by Moslem merchants.'³⁶

Paper was an entirely new commodity which now came into fairly general use, and, as can be imagined, gave a tremendous new stimulus to learning and science. It must be remembered that for nearly a hundred years after the Hijra there were practically no books at all. Knowledge generally was handed down by word of mouth, and there was the curious situation where students who wished to acquire the elements of Arabic literature and philosophy were compelled to go to the desert for it, to 'travel in search of knowledge', as it was expressed at the time. 'But the new Baghdad provided a common centre where rival schools of grammarians, poets and religious commentators could meet; and Mesopotamia in general, and Baghdad in particular, became the forcing ground of that intellectual society which, by spreading the fruits of the culture of the ancient Greeks east to Samarkand and west to Spain, lit the lamp of mental curiosity even in darkest Europe, and so led to the dawn of the modern world.'³⁵ But it was through the medium of the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and Harranians that the Western classical learning was first received into the Islamic world.

'At the court of the earliest Abbasids it was fashionable to affect a little free thought. People were becoming enlightened and played with philosophy and science. Greek philosophy, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, the old heathenism of Harran, Judaism, Christianity—all were in the air and making themselves felt. So long as the adherents and teachers of these took them in a purely academic way, were good subjects and made no trouble, the earlier Abbasids encouraged their efforts, gathered in the scientific harvest, paid well for translations and investigations, and generally posed as patrons of progress.'⁴²

It seems as though Harun's impulsive elimination of the Barmecides was his first big political mistake, for, themselves being Persians, they constituted a link of the first importance between their country and Iraq. It was inevitable that trouble

should follow between the Persian and Arab elements in the state, and sure enough they were soon supporting the Caliph's rival heirs. It will already have been gathered that Harun's sons 'showed distinct traces of an originality of mind hardly becoming in a Royal family'.⁴⁰ Harun himself had long wavered in his judgement between Amin and Mamun. At first he appointed Amin as his heir and Mamun as Amin's successor, but later cancelled the decision by practically dividing the empire between them and a third son, Qasim. It looks a little as though he himself was, by this time, already weary of the burden which the Caliphate imposed upon him, for he complained irritably of being 'set upon by spies, and watched by one's own children'. He died during a campaign against the Turkomans and was buried near Meshed, which later became a great shrine.

Harun's death was at once followed by civil war. Amin assumed office as Caliph, but Mamun received full Persian support in opposing him and heavily defeated an army which he sent against him. Mamun then besieged Baghdad. The siege dragged on for half a year, with Mamun's general, Tahir, gradually capturing and laying waste the outer suburbs, until Amin was confined within the Round City. When things seemed hopeless, Amin endeavoured to leave the city and cross the river in a small boat, but the boat was upset by stones thrown from the opposite bank, and he returned swimming. Next day he surrendered and was beheaded.

This first siege of Baghdad marks the beginning of the decline in importance of the western half of the town. The Round City in particular had suffered heavily from Tahir's catapults, and all the suburb of Karkh had been ravaged and burnt. Baths, mosques, bazaars and caravanserais, which had been symbols of the wealth of the capital, were now rebuilt on the east bank of the river. Today the Round City is largely palm-gardens, and even the exact position of the Golden Gate palace is uncertain.

Mamun's reign was notable for the tremendous increase in intellectual and scientific activity. The flower of literature, which was planted by Mansur and budded under Harun, now burst into full glory. 'The chief intellectual glory of the Pagan Arabs had been their poetry, and as civilized taste developed in Baghdad there grew an increasing appreciation

of the vast store of literature deposited with the Bedouin tribes. Among the prose writers the majority were engaged in the discussion of the *Quran*, and the many and varied interpretations of the Moslem religion were interminably dissected and compared. More important to posterity were the geographers, whose works have recorded and preserved in the greatest detail the topographical and ethnological character of the contemporary world.' ⁴⁰ The secular sciences generally were by no means neglected. Arab astronomy has given us such words as 'zenith' and 'nadir'. In the world of chemistry, processes such as distillation, sublimation, calcination and filtration date from this time, and modern chemists still use certain Arabic weights and measures. Medical practitioners required a licence, though their surgery made slow progress owing to the ban on investigating anatomy. The British scientist Newton is said to have owed much to his study of the Arab mathematicians.

Mamun himself did much to stimulate learning generally. He seems to have been a sympathetic character. 'He had all the intellectual's typical distaste for, and slight contempt of, the devious paths of practical affairs, and he lacked the grip of his predecessors both in the field and in the council chamber.' Yet 'he was a keen polo-player; of indoor amusements he preferred chequers to chess, on the score, as he put it, that one could always use dice with the former, and blame one's luck if one lost, whereas for a failure at chess, one could only blame oneself'.⁴⁰ He died suddenly at Tarsus in Cilicia, 'from a fever caused by bathing in the river on a hot afternoon, and eating raw fruit immediately afterwards'.

The eighth Caliph, Mutasim, was also a son of Harun, but his mother was a Turkish slave. By the time he succeeded his brother, Persian influence at court had become so strong that he found it necessary to surround himself with a body-guard of four thousand Turkish recruits from Transoxiana. This proved to be an unfortunate move, for their impact on the people of Baghdad and immediate unpopularity eventually created an impossible situation. The Arab writer Yaqubi describes their unbalanced behaviour in the streets of the city, where they would 'gallop about and collide with people right and left', and when the Baghhdadis set upon them and even slew some of them, no one would give evidence so that

they might be punished. Mutasim's solution of the problem was to remove himself from Baghdad and found a new capital. It was in this way that the fabulous city of Samarra came to be built.¹⁹

There are three notable examples in history of capital cities which existed for a single generation only, and owed their creation to the eccentricity or idealism of an individual. In Egypt, a Pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty, the neurotic Akhnaton, removed the seat of government from Thebes, where the turbulent priests of Ra disturbed his peace of mind, to his own short-lived garden-city at Amarnah. The Assyrian king Sargon's similar experiment at Khorsabad did not long survive his death. So with Samarra; it was built, occupied, repeatedly enlarged and abandoned all in the space of 56 years. Even so it survived the reigns of no less than eight Caliphs. Mutasim chose the site of a Christian monastery on the left bank of the Tigris, about seventy miles above Baghdad.⁴³ Its name in Arabic, Surra-man-raa, means 'Happy is he who sees it'. The Caliph no doubt took this to be a good omen, though to the people of Baghdad it signified their own happiness at seeing the unruly Turks removed to a safe distance. In any case Mutasim settled at Samarra, built himself a vast palace on the site of the monastery, and proceeded to lay out around it what was probably the most spectacular and magnificently planned city of antiquity. The seven Caliphs who followed him, each built new palaces and mosques and extended the city further and further along the river bank, until its great central boulevard was over twenty miles long. Then suddenly it was abandoned, and the court returned to Baghdad, leaving the empty shell of a city whose walls and buildings, even today, an archaeologist can trace without excavating. From an aeroplane one sees the whole town spread out like a modern garden-city, with its avenues of houses, palaces and parks. It is hard to believe that one is looking at a ruin-field unoccupied for eleven hundred years.

Having laid out the great central palace, whose remaining arches still stand on the edge of a cliff above the Tigris valley, Mutasim next remembered the purpose for which he had left Baghdad, and planned enormous enclosed barracks for his Turks, to the north and south of the city and entirely segre-

gated from the residential quarter. He bought each of them a slave girl as a wife, and carefully prescribed their mode of life. From the Turks he turned his attention to the acquisition of craftsmen and materials from all over the Arab world to beautify his city and its buildings. Marble quarries and masons' yards were established as far away as Latakia and Antioch in Syria, and a mission was sent to Syria to pillage Christian churches of their columns, pavements and carved enrichments.⁴⁴ The wide strip of land between the pebbly cliff on which the city stood and the banks of the Tigris proved to be extremely fertile, and every known variety of fruit and flower was planted there, so that the palaces on the cliff-top looked down on a paradise of orchards and gardens. The town itself sprang up in an extraordinarily short space of time under the impatient eye of the Caliph. He developed the habit of driving round the streets in the evening making generous presents to citizens or engineers who had made notable progress with their work during the day. The city was still incomplete when he died, but the fever of building and planning continued on an undiminished scale during the reigns of his successors.

Mutasim's palace, Dar-ul-Khalifa, was magnificent. The plan of its lay-out, when reconstructed, suggests the over-lavish ingenuity of a modern fifth-year student of town-planning at the Beaux Arts, or a competitor for the Prix de Rome.⁴⁵ The whole broad scheme is grouped about one tremendous axis, several miles long, starting in the east with a formally shaped racecourse, and ending in the majestic triple portico on the cliff-edge. The terrace in front of the portico had a wide staircase leading down to an artificial lake. The building itself included courtyards with running water among the flowers, fountains, swimming pools, an amphitheatre, an underground reception hall for the heat of the summer, a tunnel to give the Caliph access to his harem without appearing in public, a sporting club and polo-ground with stables for ponies, as well as parade grounds and barracks for guards. There were several slightly less pretentious palaces in other parts of the town. The great Friday mosque, much of which still stands today, like all early mosques was little more than a colossal rectangle of buttressed walls, with rows of columns inside which have now disappeared. The

spiral minaret, which has survived, stands a few yards outside the building at the opposite end to the *mihrab*.

When it came to the turn of Mutawakkil, Mutasim's son, to improve the town, he built an entirely new quarter for himself and his court, beyond what were then the city limits, to the north. Once more palaces and mansions, shops and boulevards sprang up at a great pace, and when it was finished he was able to say with childish satisfaction: 'Now I know that I am indeed a king; for I have built myself a town and live in it.' Yet Mutawakkil's greatest project of all was unsuccessful. The water of Samarra was for the most part brought from the Tigris by mule and camel or drawn from wells. Not content with this, Mutawakkil built a gigantic canal to skirt the town on the east side and give it a more ample irrigation. It is said to have cost over one million dinars. Unfortunately Mutawakkil had overestimated the skill of his engineers, and when it was completed they found themselves unable to raise sufficient water from the river to fill it. Actually it is surprising that, even in the realm of building, Mutawakkil managed to accomplish so much, for in all else, both he and his ministers were at the mercy of the Turkish mercenaries. Their intrigues and insubordination were now working up to a political crisis, and in the end no one was very surprised when the Caliph himself was murdered by one of them. From then onwards, there was no holding them at all, and their influence on the affairs of the state became more and more disastrous. We have the spectacle of 'Caliphs, made and unmade by troops chiefly Turkish under generals mostly slaves, striving for mastery. Through their influence over these slaves, the women of the court came to play an important political role and this added to the confusion'.³⁶ Finally Mustaim, a Caliph weaker than the rest, was besieged in his palace, forced to abdicate, and then pursued back to Baghdad, leaving the Turks in control of Samarra, where his slave-mother shared with two Turkish generals the supreme power. The mother of his successor, Mutazz, refused to pay 55,000 dinars which would have bought the safety of her son's life, although 1,000,000 dinars and priceless jewellery were afterwards found in her cellar.

So 'for two centuries the history of the disintegrating Caliphate presents a picture of nominal rulers ascending the

throne with no power, and descending to the grave unregretted. Peace and security, if anywhere, were enjoyed only in those outlying provinces where a governor, practically independent, held the reins with an iron hand'.^{36*} In southern Iraq the successful rebellion of a community of East African slaves against authority, and their slaughter of an army sent against them, produced one of the most grotesque reigns of terror in the whole story of Iraq. It is hardly surprising that in the meanwhile Egypt, one of the richest provinces in the Caliphal empire, seceded under Ibn-Tulun. By this time Mutamid had at least accomplished the restoration of Baghdad as the capital of Iraq.

We now come to the strange interlude during which the empire was virtually ruled by the 'Buwayhid Sultans'. It was the Caliph Muqtadir who first chose to appoint a Sassanian called Ahmad ibn Buwayh to the newly created post of 'Amir-ul-Umara', or generalissimo. The riches and influence of the Buwayhid family, like those of the Barmecides before them, soon undermined the authority of the Caliph himself, and soon there were Buwayhids, who now called themselves Sultans, ruling over a state in which the Caliphs were mere puppets. It can at least be said that in Baghdad during this period the Buwayhids had some reforms and improvements to their credit, for at the time of Adud-ud-Daulah there was a well-endowed hospital with twenty-four physicians, and his patronage of literature had produced an academy with a library of 10,000 volumes. But the Caliphs by now retained only a shadow of their former power, and the empire was already sadly dismembered. Omayyads were ruling in Spain; Shi'ite Fatimids were established in Egypt beyond the hope of displacement; northern Iraq, Persia and the east were divided amongst turbulent chieftains.

There is yet a final stage in the decline of the Abbasids before the curtain falls on the golden prime of Muslim Iraq. This was heralded by the arrival before the gates of Baghdad of an army of Seljuk Turks under the leadership of Toghrul

* The Zangid Atabegs, or Governors of Mosul in the twelfth century, are listed at the beginning of this chapter, since many interesting monuments in north Iraq were either built by them or date from their time. There is no space here to follow the fortunes of Mosul under their rule.

Beg. The Seljuks, who were called after Toghrul's grandfather, a princeling of Turkistan, had appeared in central Asia at the beginning of the eleventh century. It was they who were first responsible for the Turkification of Asia Minor, in fact of modern Turkey, and their conquest extended to Byzantium, which they sacked, taking prisoner the Emperor, Romanus Diogenes. There is something about these Turkoman warrior-princes which captures the imagination. Alp Arslan, the conqueror of the Byzantines, was by no means a self-effacing character, yet the epitaph which he himself chose for his tomb at Marv was a model of humility. It read : ' O ye that have seen the glory of Alp Arslan exalted to the skies, repair to Marv and you will behold it buried in the dust.' Gibbon drily points out in a footnote that the reader of the epitaph could not ' repair to Marv ', as he would be there already.²⁸

At Baghdad the Buwayhid family fell before Toghrul Beg, whom the Caliph Al-Kaim naturally welcomed to the city as his deliverer. The Seljuks continued to have their seat of government at Ispahan, but showed some partiality for Baghdad. Alp Arslan's son, Malik Shah, later married the daughter of the Caliph Muhtadi, and at one time even proposed to combine the Caliphate with the Sultanate which the Seljuks had now inherited from the Buwayhids. Arab writers pay high tributes to the peace and prosperity of the Seljuk empire during his reign, particularly stressing the unprecedented safety of the roads. He was the patron and protector of the poet Omar Khayyam and during his reign an important reform was made in the Persian calendar.

Two other prominent characters at the time had both been schoolfellows of Omar Khayyam. One was Nizam-ul-Mulk and the other Hassan Sabbah. These three had sworn a schoolboy oath that if any one of them should make his fortune, it should be shared between all of them. Nizam became *vazir* to Malik Shah, and, when reminded of his oath by the other two, generously shared with them the wealth which he had by then accumulated. Omar found that his share enabled him to live peacefully at court and work on the new Jalali calendar; but Hassan used the money to organize the nihilist sect of 'Assassins', which, under the sobriquet Old Man of the Mountains, he led in their work

of furthering by violence the cause of the Fatimids in the East.⁴⁵

It was also about this time that the Jews in Kurdistan produced their pseudo-Messiah, Alroy Daud, who was the subject of a well-known novel by Lord Beaconsfield. There are many legends about him but all agree that he was eventually assassinated.

A last, ineffectual attempt to restore the Caliphate was made by Al-Nasir. He received some support from Salah-ad-Din the 'Simple Kurd', known and feared by the Crusaders as Saladin. It was at this time also that an Arab order of chivalry called 'Futuawah' was founded, and had some success. Nasir also built the Talisman Gate in the new wall of Baghdad-East, with its fine inscription, which survived until 1917 when it was destroyed by an explosion. The contemporary Arab writer Ibn Jubayr gives a detailed and interesting description of the whole city and its buildings at this time.

Three years after Mustansir became Caliph, the death occurred in the remote east of Jenghis Khan, the great Mongol leader. In the heart of central Asia Jenghis Khan had welded together a group of fiercely independent tribes into a magnificent war-machine, which was destined to lay waste the whole of western Asia, and even threaten Europe. He left a son called Ogotai, who, after the formality of forty days' modest hesitation, was installed as Khakan, or supreme ruler of the Mongols. Ogotai had no difficulty in sweeping away the petty princes of Persia, and almost at once descended on Iraq, capturing successively Mardin, Nisibin and Mosul. After this he had a temporary setback, when his troops were defeated by a Caliphal force at Jebel Hamrin, but for several years afterwards continued to make repeated raids southwards. When the state of insecurity became unbearable, the Caliph, who was about to make the pilgrimage, called the Ulema and asked whether they did not think it would be better to spend the money in making war on the infidel. When they agreed, he declared *jiḥād*. The usual enthusiasm was aroused in Baghdad, and 'elderly grandees and doctors of law could be seen every day on the desert outside the city encouraging the troops and joining in their exercises'.⁴⁶ So much expenditure of effort seems to have had some initial success, for the Mongol threat was again temporarily averted. By the

time it once more materialized, Mustansir had been succeeded as Caliph by Mustasim.

It was Ogotai's youngest son Hulagu who next turned his attention to Iraq. He first pillaged Diarbekr, killing 10,000 of the inhabitants, and at the same time had the good fortune to capture a caravan setting out for Harran with a load of 600,000 gold dinars. This money assisted him in his preparations for an attack on Baghdad. They took two years. A thousand skilled engineers were engaged to prepare war-engines. His weapons included Chinese arbalisters, fire-arrows in which naphtha was used, and mechanical bow-strings manipulating three bows at a time, 'with arrows several ells in length'. Before he started, each of his men was supplied with a thousand pounds of meal and a skin of *liben*.

The Mongol host took a month to cross the river Oxus, and soon afterwards encountered their first enemies. These were the Assassins, who had been sending desperate appeals for help as far afield as France and England. Their famous mountain stronghold at Alamut was completely wiped out. With it went the Old Man of the Mountains and a famous library, whose total destruction, combined with that of another at Madinah a year later, undoubtedly involved an appalling loss to Islamic culture. Hulagu next made his headquarters at Hamadan and wrote a letter to the Caliph demanding his submission. There had been a serious flood in Baghdad in the same year and Mustasim's misfortunes were lying heavily upon him. He had already withdrawn into a state of haughty privacy, and, according to tradition, hung a black silk cloak outside the palace gate, to be kissed by those who wished to pay their respects to him. To Hulagu's letter he sent a contentious reply, which called forth the ominous comment, 'The Caliph is as tortuous in his policy as a bow, but I will chastise him until he becomes as straight as an arrow'.

Hulagu now dispatched armies in several directions with instructions to converge on Baghdad. One crossed the Tigris, near Tekrit, on a bridge of boats and moved south between the rivers. After a temporary setback at Anbar on the Euphrates, it then moved eastwards and defeated a Caliphal force on the Dujail canal. The southern army had reached Kufa and Hillah, whose Shiah inhabitants proved friendly.

Hulagu left his baggage at Khaniqin, and then, advancing

to Baghdad, encamped before the Talisman Gate. Swarms of peasant refugees had for some time been crowding into Baghdad-West and it was now in no state to be defended, so the Caliph's commanders cut the bridges and prepared to defend only the newer town on the east bank. Outside its walls and parallel to them the Mongols constructed a rampart and ditch, isolating it on the land side. By force of numbers the whole work was completed in twenty-four hours and bases constructed for the naphtha catapults. On 30 January 1258 the bombardment began, and lasted six days. On 10 February Baghdad surrendered and the Caliph Mustasim with his three sons walked slowly out of the gate into the enemy's lines. In a week of slaughter about 800,000 non-combatants lost their lives, although some mercy was shown to Christians at the request of Hulagu's Christian wife. Hulagu entered the city and took up quarters in the Caliphal harem to supervise the removal of the treasure. Seven hundred women and eunuchs were put to death, and a careful inventory of their belongings was made. The gold and silver ornaments were stacked mountain-high around Hulagu's tent. Next he called a convention of *magi* to inquire, 'Would a convulsion of nature follow the execution of the Caliph?' The answer after due deliberation was, 'None followed the deaths of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ or the Martyr Hussain'. So the Caliph was put to death with all his family, except the youngest son, who eventually married a Mongol. Finally Hulagu, 'left 3,000 cavalry to keep the peace and bury the dead, and hastened to escape from the tainted air'.

With the death of Mustasim, the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad came to an end. His ancestors had ruled eastern Islam for five hundred years, but now the focus of the Muslim world was temporarily to move to the Mamluk court of Cairo and a succession of puppet Caliphs to rule in Egypt, until the final transfer of the Caliphate to the Ottoman Sultans of Turkey in the sixteenth century. From Baghdad, meanwhile, the Mongol flood swept on to Aleppo and Damascus; but it was already losing impetus, and when Hulagu was called back to Persia by the death of the Great Khan, his armies were defeated on the borders of Egypt by a Mamluk general. Hulagu, as successor of the Great Khan, assumed the title 'Ilkhan', which became hereditary. So, under the

dominion of a series of Ilkhans, we find Baghdad reduced to being capital of a province, now called for the first time Al-Iraq-al-Arabi.

With Mongols pouring out of the east and crusaders threatening the west, the Islamic world had for some time now been in very straitened circumstances. The fact that it did not in the end go under, but survived to see a new period of glory under the Ottoman Sultans, was perhaps due to an inherent quality of the Muslim religion. The last Ilkhan himself embraced Islam, and we are suddenly faced with the extraordinary spectacle of the wolf not only lying down with the lamb but eventually succeeding in effacing himself altogether; of the Mongols, in fact, 'seriously preparing to absorb the remnants of the civilization which they had destroyed, and becoming, as a result, gradually merged in the general body of the population, to disappear as a separate entity altogether'.

CHAPTER X

MONGOLS, PERSIANS AND TURKS

A.D. 1258-1900

A.D.	A.H.		A.D.	A.H.	
1256	654	Hulagu	1477	878	Khalil Mirza
1265	663	Abu Khan	1478	879	Yaqub Mirza
1282	678	Sultan Ahmad Khan	1491	892	Bai Songor Mirza
1284	680	Arghum Khan	1492	893	Rustam Mirza
1290	687		1498	899	Ahmad Mirza
1291	688	Ghaikutu Khan	1500	901	Sultan Murad
1295	692				Mohammed Mirza
1295	692	Baidu Khan			Alwan Mirza
1296	693	Mahmud Ghazan Khan	1507	908	Yaqub Beg
1302	699		1509	910	<i>Baghdad occupied by</i>
1305	702	Sultan Uljaitu			<i>the Persians</i>
1316	713	Abu Said Khan			<i>End of White Sheep</i>
1327	725				<i>Dynasty</i>
1334	732	Arpagaun			<i>The Safawid Dynasty</i>
		Musa Khan			<i>of Persia</i>
		Toghai Timur Khan			Ismail Shah
		Mohammed Shah Khan	1524	930	Tahmasp Shah
		Timurtash Khan	1533	939	<i>Ottoman Turks invade</i>
		Satibeg Khan			<i>Iraq. Persians retire.</i>
		Sulaiman Shah Khan	1534	940	<i>Occupation of Baghdad</i>
		Shah Jahan Timur			<i>by Ottoman sultan,</i>
		Khan			<i>Sulaiman</i>
		Anushirvan - K h a n			<i>End of First Persian</i>
		Adil			<i>period. Beginning of</i>
		<i>End of Hulagid Ilkhan</i>			<i>First Turkish period.</i>
		<i>Dynasty</i>			Sulaiman Pasha, first
		<i>Assumption of royal</i>			<i>wali of Baghdad</i>
		<i>title of Khan by</i>			Ayas Pasha
		<i>Shaikh Hassan, the</i>	1552	959	Baltaji Mohammed
		<i>Jalairid, with Bagh-</i>			Pasha
		<i>dad as his capital</i>			Darwish Ali Pasha
1356	755	Shaikh Oweis Khan	1566	973	Murad Pasha
1374	773	Shaikh Hussain Khan	1578	985	Alwandzadeh Ali
		Shaikh Ali Khan			Pasha
		Shaikh Ahmad Khan	1589	997	Jighalzadah Pasha
1393	793	Timur-Leng (Tamur-	1590	998	Sinan Pasha Jighal-
		lane) occupies			zadeh
		Baghdad			Hassan Pasha
1410	810	Death of Ahmad Khan			Deli Hussain Pasha
		<i>End of Jalairid Dy-</i>	1600	1008	Wazir Hassan Pasha
		<i>nasty and assumption</i>	1604	1012	Qasim Pasha
		<i>of power by Black</i>	1607	1015	Mohammed Pasha
		<i>Sheep Mongols</i>	1609	1017	Mahmud Pasha Jighal-
		Sultan Kara Yusuf			zadeh (1)
1434	835	Amir Aspan			Ali Pasha Qadhizadeh
1444	845	Jahan Shah			Dilawir Pasha
1460	861				Mustafa Pasha
1466	867	Hassan Ali Khan			Hafidh Ahmad Pasha
1467	868	<i>End of Black Sheep</i>			Mahmud Pasha Jighal-
		<i>Dynasty</i>			zadeh (2)
		Uzun Hassan Khan	1618	1027	Yusuf Pasha

* This list is largely from Coke, *Baghdad, City of Peace*.

A.D.	A.H.		A.D.	A.H.	
1619	1028		1699	1111	Daltaban Mustafa Pasha
1621	1030	Sulaiman Pasha			
		<i>End of First Turkish period</i>	1702	1114	Yusuf Pasha
		Sufi Quli Khan	1703	1115	Ali Pasha (2)
			1704	1116	Hassan Pasha
1626	1035				<i>Brought the Mamluk system to Baghdad</i>
1629	1038				
1630	1039	Bekdash Khan	1723	1135	Ahmad Pasha (1)
1638		<i>Sack of Baghdad by Sultan Murad IV. End of Second Persian period</i>			<i>Assumed authority over the whole of Iraq</i>
		Kuchuk Hassan Pasha (1)	1733	1145	
			1734	1147	Hajji Ismail Pasha
1639	1049	Darwish Mohammed Pasha	1735	1148	Mohammed Pasha the Lame (Sadr Isbouq)
1642	1052	Kuchuk Hassan Pasha (2)	1736	1149	Ahmad Pasha (2)
			1743	1156	
1644	1054	Deli Hussain Pasha	1747	1161	Hajji Ahmad Pasha
		Haidar Aghazadeh Mohammed Pasha	1748	1161	Hajji Ahmad Pasha Kaisariyali
			1748	1162	Tiryaki Mohammed Pasha
1645	1055	Kuchuk Musa Pasha	1749	1163	Sulaiman Pasha Abu-Lailah
1646	1056	Ibrahim Pasha			
1647	1057	Semyz Musa Pasha	1755	1169	<i>Establishment of a British Agency in Baghdad</i>
1649	1059	Malik Ahmad Pasha			
		Noughizadeh - Arslan Pasha	1761	1175	Ali Pasha
1650	1060	Shatir Hussain Pasha	1764	1177	Omar Pasha
1651	1061	Salahdar Qara Mustafa Pasha (1)	1765	1179	<i>British Agency placed in charge of an Englishman</i>
1653	1063	Salahdar Murtadha Pasha (1)			
1655	1065	Aq Mohammed Pasha	1775	1189	Ispinakji Mustafa Pasha
1656	1066	Khasaki Mohammed Pasha			
1659	1069	Salahdar Murtadha Pasha (2)	1776	1191	Abdi Pasha
			1776	1192	Abdullah Pasha
1662	1072	Mustafa Pasha the Hunchback	1777	1192	(Salim Effendi Qaimaqam)
1663	1073	Mustafa Pasha 'Cotton'			<i>Disorder in Baghdad</i>
1664	1074	Salahdar Qara Mustafa Pasha (2)	1778	1193	Hassan Pasha
1655	1075	Uzun Ibrahim Pasha	1780	1195	Buyuk Sulaiman Pasha (The Great)
1667	1077	Salahdar Qara Mustafa Pasha (3)			<i>Sack of Kerbela by the Wahabis</i>
1671	1082	Salahdar Hussain Pasha	1802	1217	Hafidh Ali Pasha
1674	1085	Abdul-Rahman Pasha			<i>Ghalib Pasha nominated by the Porte</i>
1676	1087	Qaplan Mustafa Pasha	1808	1222	Kuchuk Sulaiman Pasha (The Little)
1677	1088	Salahdar Omar Pasha (1)	1811	1225	Tutunji Abdullah Pasha
1681	1092	Ibrahim Pasha	1813	1228	Said Pasha
1684	1095	Salahdar Omar Pasha (2)	1817	1232	Daud Pasha
					<i>Last of the Mamluk governors</i>
1687	1098	Kaikhouda Ahmad Pasha	1826	1241	<i>Abolition of the Janissaries</i>
1688	1099	Salahdar Omar Pasha (3)			
1691	1102	Bazirgan Ahmad Pasha	1831	1246	<i>Great plague and flood End of Mamluk rule</i>
1692	1103	Ahmad Pasha			
1696	1107	Ali Pasha (1)	1836	1251	Ali Ridha Pasha
1698	1110	Ismail Pasha			<i>Euphrates expedition of Chesney</i>

A.D.	A.H.		A.D.	A.H.	
1842	1258	Mohammed Najib Pasha	1868	1284	Taqid-Din Pasha (1)
1849	1264	Abdul-Karim Nadir Pasha	1869	1285	Midhat Pasha
					<i>Made considerable reforms</i>
1851	1266	Wujaihi Pasha	1872	1288	Rauf Pasha
1852	1267	Mohammed Namiq Pasha (1)	1873	1289	Radif Pasha
1853	1268	Mohammed Rashid Pasha	1875	1291	Abdul-Rahman Pasha (1)
1857	1272	<i>Euphrates Valley Railway scheme</i>	1876	1293	Arif Pasha
1858	1274	Sidar Akram Omar Pasha	1878	1294	Qadin Pasha
1859	1275	Serkatibi Mustafa Nuri Pasha	1878	1294	Abdul-Rahman Pasha (2)
			1880	1296	Taqid-Din Pasha (2)
1860	1277	Ahmad Tewfiq Pasha	1887	1303	Mustafa Asim Pasha
1861	1278	<i>Telegraph opened to Baghdad</i>	1889	1305	Sirri Pasha
1861	1278	Mohammed Namiq Pasha (2)	1892	1307	Hajji Hassan Rafiq Pasha
1862	1279	<i>Building begun of new barracks, etc.</i>	1896	1312	Ataullah Pasha
			1899	1315	Namiq Pasha (The Less)

ONE curious and remarkable fact about the flood of Arab world-conquest was that the essentially national character of its original stimulus did not survive the peak of its success. The tide itself remained at flood for several hundred years, and in that time effectively changed the whole ethnic face of Europe and Asia. Yet from the moment the armies ceased to march and the banners were furled, the predominance of Arab leadership began to diminish, and it was only a short time before the powers of control in the empire which had been created passed into the hands of non-Arab Muslims. The glory of Islam as a world power did in fact flicker dangerously with the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate, and burnt very low indeed during the two centuries which followed. When its final renaissance occurred under the Ottoman Sultans, the tenuous cord which still bound it to Arabia had become no more than a religious symbol. As for Baghdad, its erstwhile unassailable claim to be the focal point of the Muslim world was already a fading memory, and the world of Sheherazad was paling into fantasy.

In Iraq generally the process of decline and fall took approximately three hundred years. At the close of the twelfth century A.D. the country was still the same paradise of grain and vegetation known to Hammurabi and Herodotus. Its great towns were the seat of learning and progressive thought; its highways were safe for travellers; its peasants

contented and the waters of its two great rivers flowed with controlled regularity into a million irrigation channels. Three centuries later it was reduced to a shabby and impoverished outpost of the new Ottoman Empire.

The period separating Hulagu's capture of Baghdad from its conquest by the Turkish Sultan, Sulaiman the Magnificent, is divided into four parts. For eighty years Baghdad was under the Ilkhan emperors. For another seventy it was the capital of a state 'carved by a vassal from the weakened body of that empire'. Next it was taken by two successive factions of a semi-barbaric Turkoman dynasty. And finally it was absorbed into the contemporary kingdom of Persia.

One of the most disastrous factors in this early stage of the deterioration of the country was the interference of the Mongols with the irrigation system, upon which the life of Iraq so largely depended. Longrigg⁴⁷ says: 'Most ruinous of Hulagu's acts had been the studied destruction of the dykes and headworks, whose ancient and perfect system had been the sole source of wealth. Disordered times, and the very fewness of the spiritless survivors, forbade repair; and the silting and scouring of the rivers once let loose, soon made the restoration of control the remote, perhaps hopeless problem today still unsolved.' This suggests, as was almost certainly the case, that it was not so much a matter of the deliberate and wholesale breaching of canals and barrages as one is sometimes led to suppose, but rather a slow process of deterioration for lack of proper upkeep and administration. There was no longer, for instance, anything to prevent a peasant from making a breach in the bank of a high-level canal, and drawing off the water to work his mill, or from allowing the breach to enlarge itself beyond the limit of safety. Moreover, the rivers themselves were gradually cutting deeper into the alluvium, and the increased size of the barrages required to divert the water into canals was beyond the means of any but a central organization of efficient engineers. But above all there was no security, and 'few would sow where another might reap. . . . Tribe after tribe of nomads from the steppes of Nejd and the Jazirah crossed the Euphrates to the pastures of Iraq. Grazing-grounds were allotted to the unending processes of tribal war and policy. From the Lurish hills to the Sinjar, Iraq became a country of few and small towns,

while round and between lay tracts grazed and dominated by the tribes alone'.

The disasters of Hulagu's conquest were repeated by Timur-Leng or Tamurlane, last and greatest of the Mongols. Baghdad, which had been aspiring to some measure of independence, fell easily to Timur's army. 'Thousands were massacred; mosques, schools and dwellings demolished. If the scenes and losses were less dreadful than those of the ruin of the Caliphate, it was that Baghdad in 1401 had not the same pride to be humbled and the same materials for atrocity.' The next conqueror who, after Timur's death, almost casually conquered Iraq, was Kara Yusuf, chieftain of the Turkoman kingdom of the 'Black Sheep', based on Van in Anatolia. 'In the rough manner of the time, he sold or bestowed its governorships, received the homage or bore the turbulence of the tribes.' But almost at once a rival dynasty of Turkomans, the 'White Sheep', came to power with their capital at Diarbekr, and the whole process in Iraq was repeated. When these in turn succumbed to superior force, it was 'to the new monarch of a Persia revived and re-inspired', Shaikh Safi, whose general, Taha Hussain, captured Baghdad almost without resistance. The Turkoman regime in Iraq generally was short-lived and fantastically insecure, yet traces of it are still to be seen today in the small but racially pure communities of Turkomans, which have survived, for instance, at Tell Afar and in the Kirkuk area.

'That Iraq was long since habituated to disorder; to poverty, to change and bloodshed, to alien rulers need not be said. For eight generations, each year had seen the country sink further back into tribalism, insecurity and dependence. Each month had brought news of dynastic rise and fall, to herald a fresh governor to Baghdad. Each day saw a new outrage of robbers on the roads, or the seizure of some riverside city by a tribesman usurper. So Taha Hussain was accorded a welcome stale by repetition.'

Shah Ismail, the founder of the new Safawid dynasty in Persia, was a pious descendant of the seventh Shiah Imam. So that here, after two-and-a-half centuries of semi-pagan Asiatics, was at least a truly Muslim power once more assuming control of the destinies of Iraq. 'Better than the mullahs and merchants of that day we can see that the moment was

a great one. None of the previous conquerors since Hulagu had had the stuff of permanence. All were distracted by feuds, some were scarce-settled tribesmen. The Safawid empire, infant and still growing, was the visible product of a tremendous national and religious revival. It marked the birth of modern Iran. It was founded upon ardent Shiism, highly civilized and refined. It was to outlast nine generations of men. Had not chance brought into a single age the eastern expansion of the Ottomans and the rise of this powerful Persia, no doubt Iraq would have been Persian soil from that day to our own.⁴⁷

As soon as Iraq had been added to his conquests, Shah Ismail paid a personal visit to Baghdad. His Shiah tendencies at once became evident. The tombs of several Sunni saints were desecrated, and a number of Sunni leaders put to death. When he left, after performing the pilgrimage to Kerbela and Nejef, one Ibrahim Khan was left behind as first Persian governor of Baghdad. A period of peace and even prosperity followed. 'The Persian rule was favoured by the strong Shiah element, who possessed great influence among the tribes. Persian merchants began to settle in Baghdad and to revive the commercial intercourse with the outside world which had been shattered by the constant upheavals of the preceding years. But the foundations of the Safawid power were, in fact, pretentious rather than firm. The Ottoman Turks, secure now of their position in Europe, could not but feel irritation at the rise of an unorthodox Shiah power on their flank, and the irritation was changed to active hostility by the capture of Baghdad and the indignities laid upon the orthodox residents.' Baghdad also began to grow restive, and the oppressed Sunni and non-Muslim elements began to raise their heads.

Sultan Sulaiman prepared for his descent on Iraq by making a show of force in northern Persia. He then marched southwards through Kurdistan to join his celebrated *wazir*, Ibrahim Pasha, who was already harassing the Mosul district. Longrigg⁴⁷ has an interesting passage describing Sulaiman's approach. He mentions how 'the cold and rains of November, and the little-trodden passes of the last hundred miles of mountain, made the passage of the army difficult and costly. Swollen streams swept away part of the artillery. Hundreds of animals were abandoned. Tempers were short,

high officers were disgraced. Gun carriages were burnt and the cannon buried to avoid enriching the enemy. With immense relief the Sultan at last saw the Lurish hills break and fall away, and the plains of Iraq lie before him'. The story of Sulaiman's difficulties is interesting, if only because for the first time in this history *cannon* are mentioned. The Turkish artillery of the early sixteenth century must have had more prestige-value than practical use in a long campaign.

In Baghdad the internal dissension between Shiahs and non-Shiahs made a siege of the city unnecessary. The Persian Governor slipped away to join the Shah's forces at Khaniqin, and Ibrahim Pasha formally took over control. Two days later Sulaiman arrived and made a triumphal entry. 'Nothing was left undone by the Sultan and his great vizier to encourage the loyalty of their new subjects. Local men of repute were encouraged to visit the court. Official pilgrimages were made by the Sultan to the mosque of Shaikh Abdul-Qadir, the tomb of Shaikh Maruf Al-Karkhi and the Shiah shrines of Kadhimain. The mosque of Abu Hanifah, which the Persians had demolished and desecrated, was rebuilt and ornamented with a large and stately dome. Canals and dykes were repaired, and such encouragement as was possible given to agriculture and commerce.' Finally the Sultan returned to Istanbul, leaving Baghdad in charge of its first Ottoman Governor. Iraq had now acquired the status of a Turkish province, which she was to retain, with one interruption, for four centuries.

This long period of Turkish rule is conveniently divided into two parts by a short Persian interregnum at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The first part lasted ninety years, during which twenty Turkish Pashas successively held office in Baghdad. There is neither space here, nor any adequate reason, for following the fortunes of each of these, nor, for that matter, of those who followed the restitution of Turkish control by Sultan Murad, after the Persian interregnum. Historically it is important only to pick out such internal events as affected the development or otherwise of the country, and at the same time objectively to watch the rise of Western civilization and its gradual impact upon the East in general and Iraq in particular.

The heart of Islam had shifted to Istanbul, and Baghdad .

itself had sunk to the level of a decaying provincial town, with doubtful authority even over the neighbouring country districts. 'The traditional forms of Turkish officialdom now held full sway. The Pasha, the head of the local government; the Qadhi, head of the judiciary; and the Deftadar, head of the financial departments, were all Turks and foreigners. Their authority was enforced by the Turkish Imperial troops (the celebrated Janissaries), and by a permanent corps of local soldiers. . . . The autocratic power of the Pasha was tempered by his fear of the Sultan's displeasure; by local public opinion, officially represented in an informal diwan or council of notables, and able by indirect methods to influence important elements at the capital; and by the refusal of large portions of the population, even from the first, to acknowledge his authority. The Shiah element in the holy cities, the tribesmen in the ruined countryside, offered an indefinite but continual resistance to control from Baghdad, which the Turks, even in their strong and early days, were never able quite to overcome.'⁴⁰

Isolated events give the measure of insecurity: 'Ayas Pasha led an expedition southwards for the reduction of Basrah. . . .', or again: 'The term of government of the Circassian eunuch, Yusuf Pasha, was marked by a rebellion in Kerbela, in which the Turkish garrison was put to flight by the townspeople. . . .' Of more lasting importance was the schism which occurred during the first Turkish period in the Nestorian Christian church. One section agreed to acknowledge the Pope, and thus the Chaldaean Church came into being, with a patriarch nominated by Rome under the title of Bishop of Babylon. Soon afterwards, for the first time Capuchin monks arrived in Baghdad.

It was the Persian Shah Abbas who in 1621 found himself in a position to wrest Baghdad from the loose control of the Ottomans, and the story of his seizure of the city is a thoroughly unpleasant one. Again it was not really a matter of a siege. Baghdad had been for several years suffering from serious droughts and crop failure, so that, what with flockless Bedouin wandering into the city in search of food, and communication with the outside world being paralysed by banditry on the roads and rivers, Shah Abbas' investment of the walls soon reduced the already starving inhabitants to cannibalism.



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Two early Muslim pictures of the thirteenth-century Arab painter Hariiri (fl. A.D. 1237). The upper one shows a feast-day celebration, the lower a country picnic beside a water-wheel such as is still used today.



Rhases, an early Arab chemist, at work in his laboratory at Baghdad in the sixteenth century. Reproduced from Vol. II of Berthelot's *Histoire de la Chimie*.

There were horrors on both sides. Persians stranded inside the city were hung head-downwards from the walls, and when finally the gates were treacherously opened from within, the Shah's soldiers practically decimated the Sunni community. By the time Abbas withdrew, leaving behind a Persian governor, hardly a building of the Abbasid period was left standing, and even the great mosques of Abu Hanifah and Abdul-Qadir were in ruins. It was about this time that a succession of well-known European travellers began to visit Iraq, and we consequently have a fair picture of Baghdad at one of its record low-levels. Rauwolff,⁴⁸ Balbi,⁴⁹ John Newbery, Barrett and John Eldred⁵⁰ each told his story. Some of them, like the Pope, were not too certain even of the correct name of Baghdad, and referred to it as 'Babilon'. Almost all were agreed upon the traveller's liability to equal importunities from highway robbers and customs officials.

Actually one greatly pities the unfortunate Iraqis of this period, finding their country once more the bone of contention between two great neighbouring powers. Particularly the possession of Baghdad seemed to have become an issue between the two rival Muslim sects, supported respectively by Shahs and Sultans, and therefore a point of honour exceeding in importance the city's dwindling material value.

In any case Shah Abbas' treatment of the orthodox Muslims could obviously not expect to go long unavenged. Attempts by various Turkish generals to recover Baghdad were, for one reason or another, unsuccessful, and it was not until 1638 that the task was undertaken in earnest by no less a person than the Sultan himself. This was Murad IV, who in Istanbul had grown to manhood in an atmosphere of corruption and intrigue which went far to explain the byword which his name had already become for brutality and ruthlessness. Almost inhumanly contemptuous of life, it is nevertheless said in his favour that, 'he tolerated no crime but his own', and that with all his misdeeds he saved the country. There is at all events something almost magnificent about the story of his descent on Iraq. 'On the 8th of May, all preparations made and every resource and officer of the empire mobilized and exactly directed, the army broke camp to begin the march on Baghdad. . . . At Aleppo, half-way, the army rested for sixteen days. A grand review was watched by the French

traveller, Tavernier.⁵¹ From Birejik raftloads of heavy stores were dispatched downstream to meet Murad in central Iraq. . . . At Mosul an Ambassador of India waited on the Sultan with outlandish gifts. The bulk of the artillery was now embarked upon *kallaks* to descend the Tigris, twenty cannons being kept with the army. The order of march was revised for the entry into hostile country. The Pasha of Marash took the rear, of Diarbakr the advance-guard, of Aleppo the guns. Still observing the time-table made months before, the army crossed the greater and lesser Zabs, entered and passed Kirkuk, descended from the Jebel Hamrin upon the Khalis, and camped before Baghdad.

‘This was the last visit of an Ottoman Sultan to Iraq, the last exploit of the last of the ‘great warrior-Kings of his line. . . .’⁴⁷

The siege was opened at once, since the Sultan had refused to enter the tomb of Abu Hanifah, near which his tent was pitched, until victory was won. A skilful bombardment across the river gradually breached the walls of the citadel, and the moat became full of fallen debris. The Turkish troops were greatly cheered by the active encouragement and sympathy of the Sultan himself.

It is tempting at this point to turn to the eye-witness account of the siege quoted by Richard Coke from Thevenot’s *Travels*.⁵² He says: ‘The Grand Signior caused the Pavilions of all the Chirurgeouns [Surgeons] of the Army to be pitched near his own, ordering all the Wounded men to be brought thither to be Drest, which was done and he himself comforted them with very good Words, and good Deeds; giving to every one forty or fifty Chequins. And it was found that in one day he gave to seven hundred Wounded men, from whence you may judge whether or not the fight was furious; and caused the pay of those who died to be given to their Children or their nearest Relations. And during the thirtynine days that the Siege lasted, the Town being taken on the fortieth, his Majesty made Prayers every day and every night upon his Knees, Prostrating himself upon the Ground, with Tears in his Eyes.’

Finally, on Christmas Day, a general assault was ordered. ‘The eighteenth of the Moon of Chaban there fell so much Rain that we could not keep our Matches lighted, and we

entered the Town with so great Fury and impetuosity, that the besieged begged quarter, veiled their Standards and Colours, as a sign that they submitted to the Discretion of the Sultan. . . . The soldiers in the Grand Vizier's post entered by the gate called Imam Adham [Muadhem] and began to plunder the houses. . . .

'Our men were so hot upon staying and plundering that they killed all they met, the whole night that this sacking lasted. . . . In short There were in Bagdat, One and thirty thousand pick'd and choice Soldiers, and Twenty thousand Volunteers, all whom we have put to Sword, not one having escaped to carry the news to the other Towns of Persia.'

After Sultan Murad had held prayers and thanksgivings, and arranged for the rebuilding of some of the Sunni shrines, he had next to concern himself with carefully repairing the fortifications, in order to forestall the return of the Shah, who had been watching angrily from the Persian frontier, with insufficient forces to interfere. Finally this was done and some effort also made to rebuild bazaars, plant gardens and generally restore the amenities of the town. The Sultan then prepared to leave. The Governorship was entrusted to Kuchuk ('the Little') Hassan Pasha, 'an Albanian officer of the Janissaries, of an amiable disposition'. An adequate garrison was left, and Murad, with the remainder of his victorious troops, passed out of the city through the Talisman Gate. By his orders the gate was afterwards bricked up and no living soul ever passed through it again until 1917, when it was blown up by the Turks, just before their evacuation of Baghdad.

On his journey home, the Sultan had time to reflect on the possible reaction of the Baghdadis to Little Hassan's amiable disposition; and before reaching Istanbul he sent a dispatch cancelling his appointment. His short term of office, which was repeated some years later, inaugurated a long series of almost equally brief ones, and no less than thirty different Pashas were successively made Governors of Baghdad, and departed, either literally or figuratively, leaving little to remember them by, other than an occasional cupola added to a mosque, or the story of some misfortune such as a rebellion or a famine with which they were called upon to deal.

With the first years of the eighteenth century, however,

things took a turn for the better. Baghdad was allotted two Governors in succession, father and son, both of whom seem at last to have realized that their province need not merely be treated as a regrettably chosen place of exile, with only mild pecuniary possibilities to recommend it. The first, Hassan Pasha, belonged to an army family, and had been brought up in an atmosphere of officialdom in Istanbul. 'He was accordingly quite familiar with the system that had recently grown up round the throne, of employing Circassian slaves, imported as children and specially trained, in a kind of hierarchy of civil servants arranged in companies. Hassan imported the system to Baghdad, and thus laid the foundations of the so-called "Mamluk" rule, from the Arabic name applied to these white slaves. The regime of constantly changing Pashas, appointed and changed directly by Istanbul, was now over. For the next hundred and thirty years, the government of Baghdad was destined to lie in the hands of a practically independent line of Governors, owing only nominal allegiance to the capital.'⁴⁰ The new form of rule brought prosperity to Baghdad, and sufficient stability to save it from a renewed Persian threat and dangerous tribal complications.

It will be noticed that, in the last few pages, the story of Iraq has become practically restricted to the annals of the city and district of Baghdad. This was necessary because the remaining *vilayets* which properly constitute Iraq had long ago become dissociated from the Central Government, and their fortunes are too complicated to follow. This was now changed. When Hassan died, during a campaign against Persia, he was succeeded by his son Ahmad Pasha, one of the most competent and progressive governors Baghdad ever had; and so great did the prestige of the Baghdad Pashalik become in his day that he was eventually able to recover dominion over the *vilayets* of Basrah, Mosul, Kirkuk and even Mardin.

In fact, towards the end of the period of twenty-four years during which he was in office, Ahmad had increased the size of the Iraq province even beyond the limits of its modern frontier. Furthermore, it was tacitly understood among his contemporaries that his allegiance to the Sultan and Istanbul depended only upon personal preference and loyalty. 'Under Ahmad too the Mamluk system took a firm hold in Baghdad. The Circassian boy slaves were arranged in schools, and as

they grew to manhood, drafted into "colleges" or guilds of government service.⁴⁰ The whole principle is a little difficult to understand, unless one takes into consideration the peculiar attitude towards slaves in Arab countries. Their treatment is prescribed by religious law, and permits of their becoming privileged members of a household. An Arab notable would often rather be surrounded with dependants whose personal fate was linked with his own and his family, than be attended by unreliable hirelings; and in the easy-going and instinctively democratic atmosphere of such a family, habits of companionship and affection, growing among the children, would extend to their elders, and arbitrary class distinction would soon be obscured by pure personal merit. So in the business of government, 'it paid an astute Governor to attach to himself slave soldiers and officials, who might easily be made to dread his fall as acutely as he did himself'.⁴⁰ Under these conditions, it is not surprising to find that one of the Georgian slaves imported to serve Hassan Pasha had later been freed in return for a personal service, and eventually married Ahmad's daughter, Adilah. It was this Sulaiman who was destined after Ahmad's death to become the first of the Mamluk Pashas of Baghdad.

Sulaiman Pasha proved in every way as efficient a governor as his father-in-law Ahmad, or, for that matter, Hassan who had originally been his master. He held office for twelve years, during which time the ordered tranquillity of his rule was only marred by one unavoidable famine.

One notable event during his governorship was the establishment in the city of a British Trade Agency, as a branch of the Basrah office of the East India Company and under the directorship of an Englishman.

In the sequence of Mamluk Pashas who succeeded Sulaiman as Governor of Iraq there were two others of the same name, distinguished respectively by the half-affectionate sobriquets 'Buyuk' (the Great) and 'Kuchuk' (the Small). During the time of Buyuk Sulaiman an episode occurred which must have shaken the Shiah world to its foundations. A young Nejde Arab called Mohammed Abdul Wahab, after studying in Baghdad and Damascus, had returned to his own country to found a new puritan sect, which came to be called the Wahabi. The Wahabis aspired to restore the rigid asceticism.

of the early Islamic doctrines and to combat all forms of idolatry and laxity of living.

Abdul Wahab's formula seems to have had a powerful attraction for the cruder desert Arabs of his time, and the number of his supporters grew so fast that soon they became a menace to the majority, who could not or would not accept his manly but intolerant creed. Yet no one expected his crusade to take the form which it eventually did. For, having led his followers up the Euphrates into Iraq, he waited for a day when the majority of the people of Kerbela were on a pilgrimage to Nejef, and then proceeded to sack the sacred shrine of the martyr Hussain. 'The mosque was quickly stripped of all that savoured of idolatry, the rich hangings, the gold and silver plate, the girdles of precious stones, the priceless carpets which formed the accumulated offerings of wealthy Shiahs for centuries.'⁴⁰

By the time help arrived, the puritan vandals had finished their work of destruction and departed into the desert. The thrill of horror caused by this outrage soon reached both Istanbul and Persia, but none for the moment was in the position to avenge it, and the contemporary Shah was with difficulty dissuaded from himself intervening. Kuchuk Sulaiman Pasha, with whose term of government the nineteenth century began, lived in continual fear of a repetition of the incident; yet at the end it seemed that the flame of the Wahabis' militant asceticism had burnt itself out.

This was perhaps as well, since Said, the last but one of the Mamluks, seems to have given Baghdad a little Indian summer of gaiety and extravagance, almost comparable with the reign of Harun Al-Rashid's son Amin. 'An attractive youth of twenty-two', he was 'by nature generous, liberal and brave; but he was also weak and pleasure-loving and over-fond of the opposite sex. He was greatly under the influence of his mother and of an effeminate male friend.'⁴⁰

At the accession of Kuchuk Sulaiman, the British Resident in Baghdad had been granted consular rank, and during Said's time this position was filled by the celebrated Mr Claudius James Rich, whose thirteen years 'raised the British position to that of the unquestioned second in the town, ranking only after the Serai itself'.

Said's deposition for inefficient rule made way for the last

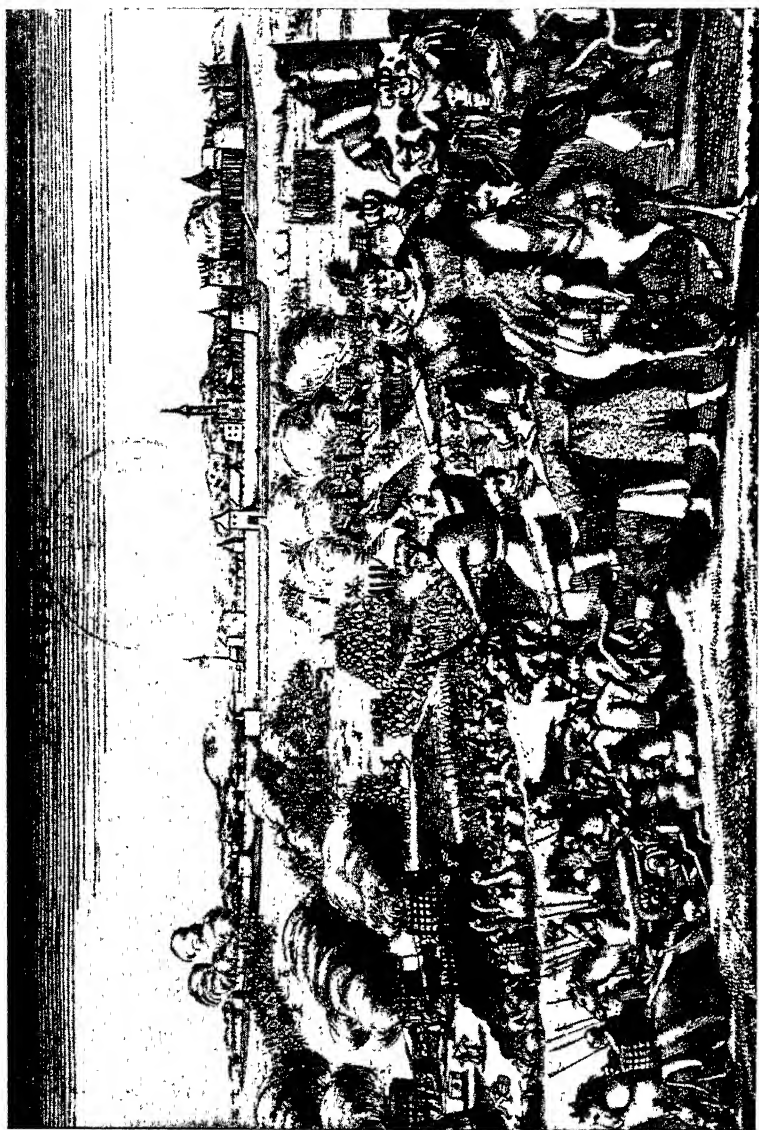
and most remarkable of the Mamluk governors. This was Daud Pasha, who had spent much of his youth as a religious student in the shrine of Shaikh Abdul-Qadir Al-Gailani, but had more recently discarded the pen for the sword and distinguished himself in a campaign against the Kurds. Daud almost at once had to face a Persian invasion. The Shah, Fath Ali, had by no means forgotten the Wahabi insult to the Shiah shrine at Kerbela and the failure of the Baghdad government to take any measures to prevent its repetition. He now made this his excuse for an armed campaign against Iraq, and succeeded in reaching the walls of Baghdad. But while the townspeople were reluctantly preparing for yet another siege, Daud Pasha was relieved of the necessity of preparing his defences by the news that there was a serious outbreak of cholera among the Persians. Sure enough they were compelled to withdraw from the city, and, after a half-hearted skirmish at Qizil Rubat, returned across the frontier.

Actually Daud Pasha's defences might have stood some chance of successfully resisting the Shah's attack. Increasing contact with Europe had enabled him to obtain the services of a French military expert, who had been taking great pains over training his gunners and instructing his Mamluk troops. A description of him has survived in the journal of a visiting British Army officer. 'A tall, thin man, about sixty years of age; his weather-beaten face had been bronzed by long exposure to the eastern sun; formidable white moustaches graced his upper lip; and over his eyes was a pair of ferociously bushy eyebrows, the peculiar elevation of which infallibly stamped him a Frenchman. The variety in his dress marked the true soldado; the buttons of his coat were adorned with the imperial crown and initial of Napoleon; from the button-hole was suspended a croix of Louis the Desired; and a flaming pair of capacious Turkish trousers bespoke his present service.' The Englishman could perhaps afford to be patronizing so soon after Waterloo, nor was he beyond turning an interested eye on the Baghdad ladies: 'There were several women in the crowd who did not scruple to lift their veils, the better to indulge their curiosity. . . . They have tolerably good features, but their pale pink complexions strongly mark their state of habitual seclusion. Their robes, being open as far as the chest, leave the person considerably exposed.'⁵³

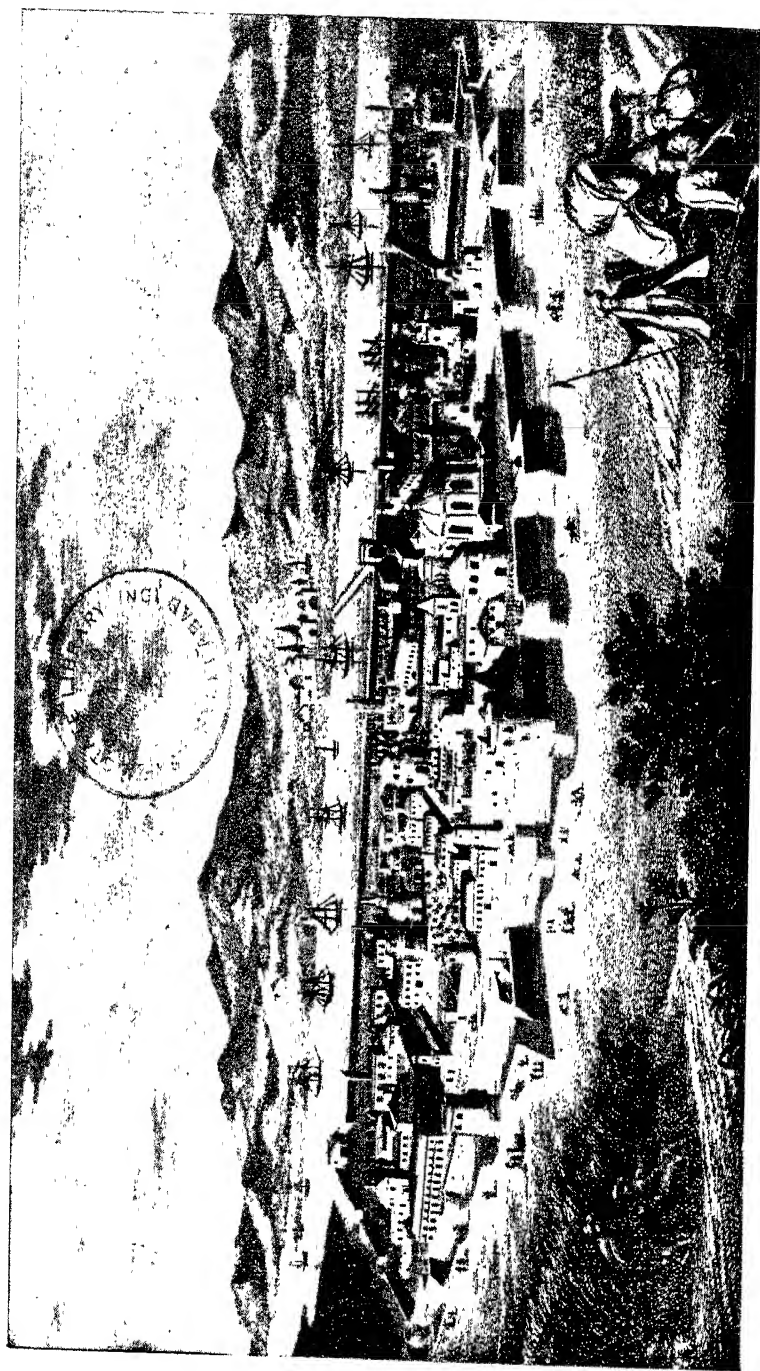
Meanwhile in Istanbul it was becoming increasingly clear that the regime of slave officials and soldiers could not last much longer. A progress of ideas was taking place with which they were unable to keep pace, and their failure to do so was turning them into an inconvenient anachronism.

Sultan Mahmud II was not the first Turkish ruler to insist that even the slave class should subscribe to the latest innovations in military training and organization. But unlike his predecessors, when the Janissaries mutinied he did not quietly submit to their tyrannical behaviour. They were massacred to the last man, and orders were sent out for a similar purge in all the principal towns of the Ottoman empire. When the news reached Daud Pasha in Baghdad he at first kept it to himself, but at the same time ordered a grand parade of troops in the courtyard of the Serai, with the Janissaries in the centre and picked Mamluk troops surrounding them on all sides. As a final precaution he even had batteries of light artillery trained on them from the walls. Daud then read out the decree from the Porte, offering the Janissaries the alternative of enlistment in the new military unit, or death, and, after a hushed and astonished pause, the whole force threw down their *qalpaqs* and assumed the headdress of the new army. The joyful occasion was then emphasized by salvos from the guns which had been intended, if necessary, to be used for another purpose. Yet even this able piece of diplomacy did not appear to satisfy Sultan Mahmud, for shortly afterwards an unsympathetic-looking envoy arrived from Istanbul, bringing an order for Daud's deposition. This undoubtedly called for more drastic steps, and a dispatch full of the deepest regret and sympathy was sent to Istanbul, announcing the death of the envoy from cholera. Even Daud Pasha cannot have expected to get away with this archaic foolery for long, and sure enough a young official called Ali Ridha was now sent with an armed force to supersede him. But before he reached Iraq a series of appalling catastrophes occurred in the city of Baghdad.

In the first months of the year 1831 the plague settled down upon Iraq in grim earnest. In Baghdad Daud was entreated by the British Resident to establish a quarantine. But the plans drawn up by the Residency doctor were rejected



An almost contemporary picture of Sultan Murad's siege of Baghdad in 1638



An early European traveller's recollection of Baghdad, reproduced from Dapper's *Beschreibung von Asten*, published in Nuremburg in 1681

by the Pasha on the grounds that they were incompatible with the Muslim religion. 'Thousands died weekly in the city, where by now even the wailing for the dead had been succeeded by a blank and awful silence. Normal life broke down completely. In every lane lay unburied corpses, last members of families of which no one now remained to pay the usual offices. Those of the terrified inhabitants who fled desertwards or downstream found themselves at the mercy of Bedouin robbers or predatory boatmen. Soon the streets were infested by ghoulish bands of ruffians who, reinforced by alcohol and opium, did not hesitate to enter every house and strip even the dead and dying of their property,' till they themselves were laid low by the disease. But there was worse to come. 'From the 21st of April a fresh source of terror appeared. The Tigris was in high flood somewhat later than its wont. Already the waters round Baghdad had prevented thousands from escaping, and allowed no foodstuffs to come in. Inch by inch it now crept to the tops of the neglected flood-banks on the riverside, until cellars began to fill and a single foot of crumbling dyke kept the river from the city. In the night of the 26th a section of the wall subsided on the north face of the town, and part of the citadel collapsed. Two hundred houses fell in the first few hours. Within twenty-four, part of the Serai and seven thousand houses were in fallen ruins, burying the sick, the dead and the healthy in a common grave. The priceless horses of the Pasha's stable ran wild in the streets, his vast granaries lay open. . . . By the end of May not only the flood but the intensity of the plague had passed its worst. . . . Gradually the bodies were taken to burial or to the river, strayed animals made fast, a little food offered for sale and the voice of the call to prayer sounded from such mosques as remained. Of the population of Baghdad, which had risen in the early, prosperous years of Daud's rule to about 150,000, two-thirds had perished with the city's most recent agony, and a mere 50,000 souls now occupied the few dry corners in the waste of Mesopotamian mud which had once been the Capital of Iraq.'⁴⁰

Daud Pasha, 'himself sick of the disease, attended by a single old woman and securing food only through the kindness of a fisherman,' as though his troubles were not enough, now learnt of the arrival of Ali Ridha, intent upon imple-

menting his deposition. At first, sick at heart and without means of defence, Daud allowed Ali Ridha's advance-guard to enter the city and occupy the Serai, but presently, reinforced and encouraged by Mamluks and returning Baghdadi supporters, he suddenly set upon and destroyed them. As though Baghdad's misfortunes would never end, during the fight the Serai caught fire and all its civic treasures of armour and tapestry were destroyed in a few hours. Yet Ali Ridha himself was kept at bay for some months. Finally, faced with the alternatives of outlawry by the Porte or a voluntary surrender on friendly terms, the city chose the easier way. Daud himself, in consideration of all he had been through, was treated with kindness and respect. He was dispatched to Istanbul with a recommendation to mercy, and lived to hold many more distinguished posts, including that of Guardian of the Shrine of Madinah, where he died in the odour of sanctity. Not so his Mamluk supporters however; Ali Ridha merely summoned them to a general *diwan*, at which he read the Sultan's decree for the abolition of their privileges. When he rose to retire, it was the signal for a mass-murder, and the famous slaves were at last entirely wiped out. Istanbul had won.

There is little to tell of the local political history of Iraq during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Its single *motif* is, 'the maintenance of an uneven balance between the Serai, representing an absolute medieval officialdom vainly struggling to bring itself up to date, and the British Residency, representing the restless commercial energy of the new West'. Almost the only attempt at serious reform was made by Midhat Pasha at the end of the sixties. It was he who conceived the idea of a horse tram to relieve the pressure of pilgrim traffic between Baghdad-West and Kadhimain. Another of his plans was for demolishing the medieval city walls and converting their sites into handsome boulevards. The quality of the bricks was admirable and he hoped by their sale to realize a large sum for military purposes. Unhappily, 'like other Turkish schemes of this period the work was only partially carried out, with the result that Baghdad lost her walls, and got in return, not a boulevard, but a surrounding ring of enormous ruins'. Midhat did, however, complete the reconstruction of the Serai on an impressive

scale. The first establishment of a *baladiyah* or Municipal Council and the inauguration of elementary and technical government schools were also due to his enterprise.

In spite of such belated and inadequate measures as these, the country of Iraq passed from the nineteenth to the twentieth century 'little less wild and ignorant, as unfitted for self-government, and not less corrupt than it had entered the sixteenth; nor had its standards of material life outstripped its standards of mind and character. Its resources lay untouched, however clearly indicated by the famous ages of the past and by the very face of the country. Government's essential duty of leading tribe and town together in the way of progress had scarcely been recognized; in the yet clearer task of securing liberty and rights to the governed (however backward), it had failed more signally than any government of the time, called civilized—failed in spite of the great advances made simultaneously in Europe and in India, in spite, even, of the material reward which success must have conferred.'⁴⁷

CHAPTER XI

ARABS. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A.D.	A.H.		A.D.	A.H.	
1902	1318	Ahmad Feizi Pasha	1917	1334	General Maude. Cap-
1902	1318	Abdul Wahab Pasha			ture of Baghdad by
		Abdul Majid Effendi			the British and
		Hazim Bey			Indians.
1907	1323	Nadhim Pasha	1919	1336	Sir Arnold Wilson
1908	1324	Muhammad Fadh l			Inauguration of Bri-
		Pasha Dagastani			tish civil adminis-
		Najm-ud-Din Pasha			tration
		Muhammad Shawkat	1920	1338	Rebellion
		Pasha		1339	Sir Percy Cox
1910	1327	Nadhim Pasha	1921		King Faisal I, estab-
1911	1328	Yusuf Pasha			lishment of Iraq
		Jamal Pasha			Kingdom
		Zaki Pasha	1924		Ratification of the first
		Hussain Jalal Bey			Anglo-Iraqi Treaty
1914	1331	Jawad Pasha	1926		Second Treaty
		Outbreak of First	1927		Third Treaty
		World War	1932		Iraq admitted to the
		Dr Rashid Bey			League of Nations.
		Sulaiman Nadith Bey			End of the Mandate.
		Nur-ud-Din Bey	1933		King Ghazi
1916	1333	Khalil Pasha	1939		King Faisal II. Out-
					break of the Second
					World War.

BEFORE turning to the early years of the twentieth century, we must pause to examine the reaction of Iraqis and of the Arab world generally to their now increasing contact with Western civilization. The great influence which the West was likely to exercise on Arab destinies had long been apparent. 'The East, grown poor and backward, was first impressed by the material prosperity of the new West, a prosperity which seemed to be at the roots of Western prestige and power. . . . Western enlightenment as well as Western prosperity gave a benediction to Western forms of political organization, and these in time came to find favour and acceptance. Thus nationalism, a Western concept of State organization and one running counter to Islamic internationalism, made headway in the Ottoman Empire and played a main part in Ottoman dissolution and Arab revival'.³⁴

The channels through which these and other Western ideas had begun to penetrate into Iraq were various, but in the early stages always connected with trade. In the seventeenth

century the sea-borne trade of the Persian Gulf was largely shared between the British, the Portuguese and the Dutch; the Turks showed no interest. Soon the establishment of an agency of the East India Company at Basrah gave precedence to the British, and the personal interest of King William IV was partly responsible for obtaining a concession for small British-owned vessels to ply for trade on the internal waterways of Iraq, as they do to this day. Another step was taken in the middle of the nineteenth century when a telegraph line was constructed, connecting the Persian Gulf with the Mediterranean. This put foreign traders in Iraq in a better position to cope with local obstruction, and infringement of their rights. Another great commercial enterprise, which, had it succeeded, would have brought Iraq more rapidly and effectively into contact with the West than even the building of the Suez Canal, which eventually made it unnecessary, was a scheme for a fast route to India by means of steamers on the Euphrates, and a short railway linking that river to the Mediterranean. An expedition was organized by the two great trading pioneers, Lynch and Chesney, and two steamers, the *Tigris* and the *Euphrates*, were successfully brought overland, via Aleppo, and assembled on the river at Birejik. One was unfortunately lost during the early stages of the venture downstream, but the other was successful in navigating the lower reaches of the Euphrates as far as Basrah. Meanwhile an elaborate survey of both rivers had proved the Euphrates the less suitable of the two for this type of transport.

At the same time the French plans for the Canal had been going ahead. Owing to the Indian Mutiny, Britain required certain concessions from the French in Egypt in connexion with the movement of troops, and as a conciliatory gesture dropped the scheme for the Euphrates route. But the possibilities of river transport generally had now become clear, and Captain Lynch soon obtained a *firman* authorizing the maintenance of two steamers on the Tigris, so inaugurating the romantic family business now merged in the famous firm locally called 'Mespers'.

Also the whole subject of railways, about this time, began to take on a new political significance. At the beginning of the present century Turkey granted to Germany a concession

to build a railway from Istanbul to Basrah, and this seemed to Great Britain a direct threat to the Persian oil-fields, which were rapidly becoming a main source of her oil-supply. 'The interplay of international politics in the Arab countries, which these activities involved, was not lost on the Arabs. They saw signs and tokens that presaged a great war, a war with which their own destinies were to be bound up.'³⁴ Once more the tantalizing but elusive significance of the word 'nationalism' came to be discussed.

The spread of nationalism to Arab countries under the Turks properly belongs to this period, and is attributable to the small but increasing literate class in the large towns. To the agricultural and tribal masses it meant nothing, and even among the literate its progress was slow. It must be remembered that, up till now, to no section of the Arab world did the Turks seem like tyrannical masters, to be got rid of at any price. 'The Ottoman Empire was not narrowly Turkish in spirit, it was a loosely administered hegemony of diverse provinces, and if the local governor and local general and the like were appointed from Constantinople, they were by no means always of Turkish blood. Arabs—generally from Syria—Kurds and even Cretans, came indifferently with Turks to administer the provinces of Iraq.

'The Turks, till recent times tribesmen themselves, were by no means inexpert handlers of the Arab tribesmen either. They understood, if they no longer sympathized with, the wayward point of view that resented any close government control; their own careless medieval methods were indeed well suited to the taste of the tribes. . . . It was when the Turks began to improve their administrative machine on Western lines, and with Western applause, that the old personal touch was lost and they grew less popular. They had come to think with the West that an efficient administrative machine was an effective substitute for personal rule. The fez was to replace the turban, the literate townsman to be promoted at the expense of the local aristocrat. But the conditions necessary for a Western regime were wanting. The bulk of the population were tribesmen and not impressed by literacy nor attracted by bureaucrats. . . . The demand on them for increased taxes only intensified their opposition to paying taxes at all. If they wanted water for their ricefields,

why shouldn't they cut canals, and what if this did flood highways? Food was an older and greater consideration for them than wheeled traffic, for which, indeed, they had no need at all.' ³⁴

For the new Arab intelligentsia, these belated and ineffectual attempts at reform, and the aspirations of the Young Turks, only served to draw attention to and emphasize the poverty and backwardness of their own country, which they began to compare with the prosperity of Egypt under Western guidance. Furthermore the Arab nationalist secret societies which had long existed both in Egypt and Syria were now acquiring an influence which the Turks could no longer afford to ignore, and by 1912 the group called 'Al-Ahd' had already extended its activities from Istanbul to Iraq. To educated young Arabs in Baghdad the Turkish rule, of which their fathers had been so little conscious, had now become the 'Turkish Yoke', and 'Ottomanism' had become something to fight against.

This, then, was the background against which two great campaigns of the First World War were fought; and though in Iraq the attitude of the Arabs could for the moment have little effect on the actual fighting between British and Turkish armies in Mesopotamia, it will be seen that elsewhere the dawning consciousness of nationalist aspirations was to lead to that Arab Revolt which so considerably affected the shaping of Near Eastern destinies.

Two days after Britain's declaration of war on Turkey, on 7 November 1914, British and Indian troops appeared in transports at the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab. In their initial stages the object of the operations which followed was the comparatively modest one of rendering secure the valuable installations of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company by establishing a British position in Basrah. This was accomplished with comparatively little opposition, and early in 1915 the expeditionary force was increased to the strength of an army corps and Generals Townsend and Nixon, who had taken over command, were encouraged to undertake a more ambitious campaign in the interior. Townsend's first success was the occupation of Amara, 60 miles north of Qurnah on the Tigris. From the free and picturesque use which he made of various forms of water-transport, this operation has sometimes been

referred to as 'Townsend's Regatta'. He captured 17 guns and 18,000 prisoners. Meanwhile Nixon took Nasiriyah, collecting another 17 guns and 1,000 prisoners. After this the Indian Army command decided that Townsend should press on to Kut, since at this point on the Tigris the Shatt-al-Hai would give his troops a line of communication with those of Nixon at Nasiriyah on the Euphrates. Again Townsend was successful. More guns and prisoners were taken, and the fleeing Turks were pursued by the cavalry half way to Baghdad. 'The idea of pushing on as far as Baghdad had already taken shape even before the occupation of Kut. . . . The military authorities at Home, while admitting the possibilities of capture, regarded permanent retention as out of the question with the limited numbers available, and they declared that if the place was to be held, Nixon must be reinforced by two divisions.'⁵⁴ But the Government, feeling that some dramatic achievement would be the correct antidote to the disappointment which had just been occasioned by the failure of the Dardanelles campaign, soon became insistent, and Nixon was ordered to advance. Townsend was a little late in starting his column up the Tigris, owing to shortage of supplies, and the Turkish Army meanwhile had time to obtain reinforcements.

Not for the first time in this history, a battle was fought at Ctesiphon, and in a loop of the river just south of the ruined archway one can still see the trenches and earthworks where the little Anglo-Indian army fought against considerably superior numbers. After suffering severe losses, Townsend was compelled to return to Kut.* Nixon subsequently decided that he should remain there and risk the investment of the town.

The siege of Kut was no epic. It was, in fact, in some ways one of the most depressing episodes of the last war. Nixon had thought that Townsend would certainly be relieved before his supplies ran short. The German Field-Marshal Von der Goltz, who had just taken supreme command of the Turkish Forces in Mesopotamia, also realized that an attempt of this sort would be made, and accordingly moved part of the four divisions at his disposal some way down the river,

* Air reconnaissance also showed that the Turkish army had received considerable reinforcements.

to be ready for it. The first attempt was actually made by General Aylmer, commanding the Seventh and Third Indian divisions which had been diverted from the Western front in Europe. An engagement was fought at Umm-al-Hanna about 20 miles below Kut, but Aylmer's force lost so many men that it was necessary to pause and await reinforcements. At about the same time Nixon was succeeded in the general command by Sir Percy Lake. Lake set himself to improve the line of communications to Basrah, and to develop the wharves at that port, while he awaited the arrival of the Thirteenth Indian Division which was now being brought from Egypt. Meanwhile in Kut the garrison was already on much reduced rations. After several more attempts to penetrate the Turkish lines astride the Tigris had failed, the situation became very grave, and when a desperate effort to run in a steamer full of supplies through the blockade was also thwarted, Townsend found it necessary to surrender. The garrison which was taken prisoner numbered 9,000, and efforts to save the town had already cost 24,000 casualties. The verdict of a Royal Commission set up to inquire into the whole operation was that the campaign had been undertaken 'without adequate forethought or efficient preparations'.⁵⁴ It also made a strong reference to the unsatisfactory medical arrangements.

During the summer that followed there was a complete reorganization both of the Anglo-Indian line of communication and at the base, and a good deal of heavy artillery was gradually accumulated. In July General Maude became commander-in-chief *vice* Lake. In the middle of December he started a new campaign up the Tigris with an army now four times the size of that which had previously reached Ctesiphon. Stage by stage the defences of Kut were overwhelmed, and at the end of February Khalil Pasha, who had superseded Von der Goltz, was compelled to abandon the town and return in haste up the left bank of the river. Maude's prompt success did much to efface the memory of the previous year's discomfiture; moreover, with water-borne supplies now guaranteed, there was nothing to prevent him pushing on to Baghdad. Khalil Pasha meanwhile found himself with insufficient troops to hold the Ctesiphon position, which constituted a key-point in Baghdad's outer line of defence, and consequently retired

behind the Diyalah river, which enters the Tigris on the east side some miles below Baghdad. Part of Maude's forces moving northwards along the west bank were now rapidly approaching Baghdad, where the sound of gunfire could plainly be heard. On reaching the Hillah road, they fought an important engagement which was watched by Khalil Pasha in person from his pavilion near what is now called the Iron Bridge. At about the same time a detachment of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment succeeded brilliantly in forcing the passage of the Diyalah in the very teeth of the enemy. There is a stone memorial to those who fell at 'Lancashire Bridge'.

On the night of 10 March there was an historic council of war in Baghdad, as a result of which Khalil Pasha telegraphed to Istanbul as follows :

'In the face of this attack which the enemy has carried on without ceasing for three months with very superior numbers and plentiful ammunition, I find that the XVIII corps is almost at a standstill and its morale, from the commander to the most junior man, so broken that I am convinced, if battle is accepted with the whole of the enemy's force tomorrow, Baghdad will be lost and the whole force with its guns will be captured. Realizing the necessity of breaking off the action and restoring the morale and material strength of the army at a distance, I am faced with the sorrowful necessity of abandoning Baghdad.'⁴⁰

At 6 a.m. next morning a patrol of the Black Watch entered and occupied Baghdad-West railway station. Troops continued to arrive during the day, and in the afternoon General Maude himself landed from a river launch at the British Residency. Baghdad had again changed hands, after perhaps the mildest siege in its long history.

How the town fared during the few hours which elapsed between the departure of one army and the arrival of another has recently acquired a new significance. 'The situation was exploited by bands of riff-raff, who invaded and looted the bazaars and generally terrorized the town. Quieter citizens barricaded themselves into their houses and refused to come out until they saw the British khaki-clad police in the streets. The thieves, on the arrival of the latter, grew afraid to make the best use of their plunder, and for some hours the strange

sight was to be seen of all kinds of valuable material lying about the streets and lanes.'⁴⁰

After order had been restored General Maude issued a long proclamation 'to the people of the Baghdad Wilayet', which had been prepared for the occasion in London.

'Since the days of Hulagu,' it said, 'your city and your lands have been subject to the tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunk in desolation and your forefathers and yourselves have groaned in bondage. Your sons have been carried off to wars not of your seeking, your wealth has been stripped from you by unjust men and squandered in distant places.' And it concluded: 'O people of Baghdad, remember that for twenty-six generations you have suffered under strange tyrants, who have ever endeavoured to set one Arab house against another in order that they might profit by your dissensions. This policy is abhorrent to Great Britain and the Allies, for there can neither be peace nor prosperity, where there is enmity and misgovernment. Therefore I am commanded to invite you, through your nobles and elders and representatives, to participate in the management of your own civil affairs in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British Army, so that you may be united with your kinsmen in the north, east, south and west, in realizing the aspirations of your Race.'

The city of Baghdad itself did not for the moment present at all a reassuring sight, and the confusion at first was considerable. Khalil Pasha had only just accomplished his project of cutting a new main street across the town parallel to the river, and the street itself, now named after the Caliph Harun, was still lined with the remains of houses often cut diagonally in half, and with articles of furniture still visible in the exposed upper rooms. Public services were barely functioning, and in the official sphere, administration had been greatly complicated by the removal of all the archives from the Serai. In these circumstances it can only be considered as remarkably to the credit of the new arrivals that by the time of the Armistice, eighteen months later, Baghdad 'already presented the appearance of an orderly modern city, with railways, electric light, telephones, a good postal service, a new and adequate

currency and an administration which had numbered, mapped and documented every street, bazaar, and alley'.

Rumours of a Turkish plan to retake Baghdad soon caused General Maude to resume his campaign northwards. His troops had already reached Tekrit, on the Tigris above Samarra, when he himself was suddenly struck down with cholera. The disease worked with appalling rapidity, and only a few days elapsed between his first illness and his burial in the British cemetery at Muadham.

The campaign which General Maude had begun was brilliantly concluded by Sir William Marshall. The last battle of consequence was fought at Sherqat, where a division and a half of the Turkish army, commanded by Ismail Hakki Pasha, surrendered on 30 October with all its guns and equipment. Another British column, which had captured Kirkuk, now advanced almost without resistance towards Mosul, but before entering that city news arrived of the signing of an Armistice between Great Britain and Turkey.

Thus the pursuit of the retreating Turkish Army ceased at approximately the geographical line of demarcation between Arabic- and Turkish-speaking people. The Mesopotamian campaign was over, and it had ended by the expulsion of the Turks from Iraq. This had been accomplished unaided, by a British Imperial army, without assistance either positive or negative from the Arabs of the country, some of whom had even fought on the side of the defenders. This last fact is extremely important to bear in mind, since, if the same had been the case in the complementary campaign beyond the Syrian desert, the relations between Great Britain and the Arab world *vis-a-vis* a post-war settlement would have been greatly simplified. It would, in fact, only have been a matter of reconciling her exploitation of the imperial and commercial benefits, to which she had earned the right by the expenditure of lives and money, with her political conscience and whatever degree of sincerity or idealism her belief in the right of all people to self-determination had by then attained. This, however, was not so, and consequently it is now essential to give some account of contemporary events elsewhere in the Near East, whose aftermath so profoundly affected Iraq from 1918 onwards.

The principal distinction, then, between General Maude's

victory over the Turks in Iraq and General Allenby's campaign in Syria lay in the fact that the success of the latter was in a large measure due to the simultaneous revolt against the Turks of the Arab population of the territories in which his army was operating. In this connexion it has to be admitted that numbers of prominent Iraqis, such as Jafar Al-Askari, Nuri As-Said, Jamil Al-Midfai, etc., took effective part in the Hejaz revolt. Nuri As-Said was actually head of the Al-Ahd party. As a result, during the fighting in Palestine, Allenby's army not only had its right flank protected by mobile units of the dissident Arab tribes, ranged along the Hejaz railway, but in Palestine itself, in the words of the German commander, Liman von Sanders, 'the British forces advancing towards Jerusalem found themselves fighting in a friendly country, while the Turks who were defending their own territory found themselves fighting in the midst of a decidedly hostile population'.⁵⁵ The explanation of how the Arabs of the Hejaz and the Levant came in the second year of the war to be ranged on the side of the Allies against the Turks lies in the story of the Arab Revolt, which is briefly as follows.

In the spring of 1914 Kitchener, who was at that time British Agent in Cairo, received a call from the Amir Abdullah, the present ruler of Transjordan. Abdullah, who was at that time a member of one of the Arab nationalist secret societies, gave Kitchener some account of the strained relations between his father Hussain, the Sharif of Mecca, and the Turkish Government, and appeared anxious to ascertain what would be the attitude of the British Government in the event of a rupture between the Arabs of the Hejaz and their Turkish masters. In view of Great Britain's traditional policy of friendship with Turkey, which had not yet been interrupted, Kitchener was unable to commit himself on the subject, and a further inquiry addressed to the Oriental Secretary, Ronald Storrs (even at the conclusion of a long game of chess), obtained no more definite reply. The significance of Abdullah's visit was not however lost on Kitchener, and at the outbreak of war, being back in London, he telegraphed Storrs to make a further investigation of the attitude of the Arabs if and when Turkey came into the war on the side of the Germans. An Egyptian messenger called Ali Effendi carried a query.

from Storrs in this sense to Mecca, and returned with a written reply from Abdullah, who from now onwards treated himself more or less as his father's diplomatic representative. The reply hinted that Hussain would be prepared to lead a revolt of his Hejaz followers, provided Great Britain would offer effective support. A second exchange of notes in less equivocal language resulted in Abdullah definitely committing his father to a policy of secret alliance with England.

A few days after Turkey's entry into the war the Sultan issued to the Muslim world a call to *jihad* against the Allied powers, and a tremendous campaign of religious propaganda was set on foot all over the Arab world. Throughout the countries of the Near East, respected preachers were canvassed; and an enormous volume of inflammatory literature, much of it with an unmistakably German stamp, was distributed, and German orientalists began to appear in Damascus and Jerusalem. One of the first essentials of a successful *jihad* rally was a *fatwa* or ruling from the Sharif of Mecca himself, and this was now urgently requested. Hussain proved himself quite equal to the situation, and returned an enthusiastic reply, 'couched in that diffuse and nebulous prose of which he was a master'.⁵⁵ He would support the Holy War with all his heart, but as for endorsing it openly, that was out of the question, for fear of British reprisals on the long Red Sea coastline of the Hejaz. The Sultan in his infinite wisdom would doubtless understand that interference with his supplies from the west might lead to a revolt of the tribes. Hussain's reasoning was unassailable, and the Turks were compelled to accept his reply. At the same time, to allay suspicion, he made no difficulty in ceremonially dispatching the sacred Standard of the Prophet to Damascus, knowing that his failure to accompany it himself or even to send one of his sons would create, as it actually did, some suspicion even as to the authenticity of the relic.

Meanwhile Hussain was doing everything he could to get in touch with other Arab leaders in Damascus and elsewhere, and obtain their support. Soon, on the pretext of having discovered a Turkish plot against his life and requiring reassurance from the Sultan, he sent his second son, Faisal, to Istanbul, with careful instructions for his stay in Damascus *en route*. On his arrival in Damascus, Faisal was secretly sworn

in to both Al-Ahd and Al-Fatat, the two nationalist groups, and communicated to them something of his father's plans. On his return from Istanbul he found that they themselves had drawn up a protocol stating the conditions under which they were prepared to co-operate with Great Britain against Turkey. Their principal stipulation was Great Britain's recognition of the independence of the Arab countries lying within certain frontiers; and their definition of those frontiers is important, because it was used as a basis of discussion by Hussain in his subsequent discussions with the British Government. The line mentioned was: Mersin, Adana, Birejik, Urfa, Mardin, Jazirat ibn Omar, Amadia, to the Persian frontier; then the coast of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden) and the Mediterranean coast, back to Mersin.

Faisal returned to Mecca with a copy of the protocol, written in tiny letters, sewn into the shoe-lining of one of his servants.

Meanwhile, in January 1915, Sir Henry McMahon had become High Commissioner for Egypt, and it was with him that Hussain now made his famous exchange of letters. His first note to McMahon arrived in Cairo in July. It was again a statement of the conditions under which the Arabs would throw in their lot with Britain and corresponded exactly to the Damascus protocol, with the addition of a stipulation that Britain should recognize any Arab Caliph of Islam whom they might see fit to elect.

It should be remembered at this point that Britain's war with the Turks was not going any too well. The Gallipoli campaign had proved a disappointing failure, and that in Mesopotamia had so far made little headway. Furthermore McMahon was still heavily preoccupied with the threat to the Suez Canal and Egypt. He could not, therefore, be expected to judge Hussain's overture other than in the light of immediate military expediency. At the same time he was totally ignorant of the extent of the underground forces at work in the Arab world. He 'had not been informed of the tenor of Faisal's conversations in Damascus, knew nothing of Al-Fatat and had only the vaguest inkling of the existence of Al-Ahd. He believed that the Sharif Hussain was speaking for himself and perhaps working for his own ends, and that he could

be won over by a promise to recognize him as Caliph, and by an undefined prospect of Arab independence'.⁵⁵ In his first reply to Hussain he temporized, and said that in any case it was too soon to begin defining post-war boundaries.

By the time Hussain's second note arrived, an Iraqi Muslim called Faruki, attached to the Turkish army in Gallipoli, had changed sides, and being a member of Al-Ahd, had conveyed to the British Intelligence a much more clear picture of the extent and importance of nationalist feeling in Syria and Iraq. McMahon was, therefore, in a position to form a better understanding of the situation, and realized that it was now necessary to commit himself to a definite undertaking. This was accordingly the form taken by his second reply to Hussain, dated 24 October 1915. He was, it said, authorized by the British Government to assure the Sharif that, in return for their participation in the war against Turkey, Britain would uphold the future independence of the Arabs, in the regions within the frontiers mentioned by him, with certain reservations. One reservation was as follows: 'The districts of Mersin, Alexandretta, and the portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation.' Another stipulation was that the *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basrah should be subject to 'special administrative arrangements' in order to 'safeguard our mutual economic interest'. Finally the assurance was restricted to the regions 'in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interest of her ally, France', and it included an expression of Britain's willingness to assist the Arabs in setting up suitable systems of administration in the area of future Arab independence. There were two further exchanges of notes, in which some minor issues of the original proposal were rather inconclusively argued, but they did not materially affect the main outline of the agreement. McMahon's final communication was sent on 16 January 1916; Hussain was satisfied, and soon afterwards the Arab Revolt began.

It will be observed from the dates already mentioned that the McMahon correspondence had occupied a space of some six months; in fact the second half of the year 1915. In Europe meanwhile, other negotiations had been taking place

which affected the future of the Arab countries. Faced with a possible dissolution of the Turkish empire, and the subsequent conflicting interests of the various Allied powers in the territories of which it had been composed, it became clear to the Allies that it was not too soon for them to arrive at some agreement on the subject of their various claims to 'spheres of influence' in the territories conquered from the Turks by their combined efforts. The hypothesis upon which these negotiations were based was quite independent of the potentiality of an Arab Revolt (which did not, in fact, materialize for another six months) and could not therefore take into consideration the obligations in which the revolt's success would involve the Allies. It is true that the agreement in which they resulted was eventually concluded two months after the end of the McMahon correspondence. Yet it provided for a different contingency which was not eventually realized (namely the conquest of Arabia and the Levant without the help of the Arabs themselves), and consequently it was, in fact, never implemented.

The arrangement itself, which was concluded between Britain, France and Russia, was known as the Sykes-Picot agreement. It was not made known to the world at the time, but eventually came to light during the Russian revolution of 1917—unfortunately, as it proved, for the circumstances having by then so completely changed, caused its somewhat arbitrary disposal of the Ottoman empire to appear incongruous. Yet it did, for one thing, make it clear that France's interest in Syria was considerable, for the French sphere of influence, on the map which accompanied the agreement, augmented the boundaries of Syria by the addition of Cilicia and Mosul. It should be added, in fairness, that Picot, at least, was still in ignorance of the new British-Arab pact, when he and Sykes were at work.

It was with this background of pledges and tentative promises that the Syrian campaign was fought by Generals Murray and Allenby and supported by the Arab armies under Hussain's three sons, Ali, Faisal and Abdullah.

The importance of T. E. Lawrence's contribution to the early organization of the Arab Revolt, both in devising tactics suitably adapted to the mobility of the Arab forces and in administering the considerable funds provided by the British

Government for its sustenance, cannot be exaggerated, yet the story is too prominent in post-war literature to need dwelling on at length in this connexion. There are, however, other names which must be coupled with that of Lawrence. According to the late King Faisal, for instance, 'the claims of Colonel S. F. Newcombe or of Major P. C. Joyce to Arab gratitude were not less strong than those of any other Englishman'.⁵⁵ The names also of two eminent Arabs should not be omitted, since they were destined to loom large in the post-war history of Iraq. Jafar Al-Askari had been taken prisoner while serving with the Turks in an earlier phase of the war in the Near East, and was now released, to play a conspicuous part in the Revolt. Nuri As-Said had fled from Istanbul early in 1914. He also did invaluable work in organizing the campaign in the capacity of Chief of the General Staff.

In June 1917 Allenby relieved Murray, who had steadily been pushing the Turks back across the Sinai peninsula, and had now reached the confines of Palestine. By that time, except for the garrison which still occupied Madinah, Arabia was practically free of Turkish opposition, and the capture soon afterwards of Aqaba, at the head of the Red Sea, gave Faisal's Arab army a base for its operations on the British right flank. Jerusalem fell in December, and in the middle of March 1918 Faisal received news of the Turkish evacuation of Madinah itself. Six months later the British and Arab armies converged on Damascus. On 3 October Allenby entered the city in his car, just as Faisal arrived on horseback, with some 1,200 retainers, at full gallop. The Arab flag was already flying in the main square. This was virtually the end of the Syrian campaign, although a final battle was fought on the hills above Aleppo, four days before Turkey signed the Mudros Armistice. The Turks were commanded in this last engagement by a young officer called Mustafa Kemal Pasha.

The first world war was now over, and in January 1919 the Amir Faisal arrived in Paris as head of the Hejaz delegation to the Peace Conference. A few days before the Armistice a document known as the Anglo-French Declaration, issued as an official communique, had confirmed the Allies' intention of setting up national governments and administrations in the Arab countries, subject to 'the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations'. And

this intention was extended to areas such as Iraq which had been conquered without Arab assistance. But for the moment the more westerly Arab provinces were defined as Occupied Enemy Territory Administration—O.E.T.A. for short. O.E.T.A. South was Palestine, O.E.T.A. East was Syria and Transjordan, O.E.T.A. West, Lebanon, Alexandretta and Cilicia. Iraq had been treated as one unit under a single administration with a British Civil Commissioner at its head. Arabia itself was already a group of independent Arab states. The Sharif Hussain was now recognized as King of the Hejaz ; the Wahabi Ibn Saud was Sultan of Nejd with his capital at Riyadh ; the Imam Yahya was Governor of the Yemen, while Ibn Rashid, the only tribal leader who had actively supported the Turks, was still in control of the Shammar territory on the Iraq frontier.

At the Peace Conference, one of the first problems which presented itself in regard to the establishment of independent Arab states was the evolution of some system of foreign tutelage to fit them for self-government. The solution of the problem, which was now tentatively approved, was the assignation of a temporary mandate over each, to one of the Allied powers.* It was understood that in each case this would incidentally permit the mandatory power to protect its own interest in the mandated country and obtain certain economic and other benefits in return for the services thus rendered. But in deference to Faisal, who at the conference had proposed that steps should be taken, in accordance with the Anglo-French Declaration, to ascertain the specific wishes in this matter of the peoples concerned, an international commission was dispatched to the Near East for this purpose. This came

* In the case of Iraq : 'The terms of the mandate were never formally laid down by the League of Nations, but the relations between Great Britain and Iraq were defined in terms of a treaty concluded on 10 October 1922, originally for a period of 20 years. This, however, was modified by a protocol dated 30 April 1923, in which it was agreed that the treaty should terminate upon Iraq being admitted to the League of Nations and in any case not later than four years from the ratification of peace with Turkey, when it was contemplated that the parties would conclude a fresh treaty for the regulation of their future relations. On 24 September 1924, the League of Nations accepted this instrument as properly fulfilling the provisions of Article 22 of the Covenant. By a further treaty ratified on 30 March 1926 and resulting from the decision of the League on the Mosul question, the period was again altered to 25 years (from 16 December 1925), unless Iraq should previously be admitted to the League of Nations. She was in fact admitted on 4 October 1932.'—*Encyclopædia Britannica*.

to be known as the King-Crane Commission, and its report was submitted to President Wilson in August 1919. One of the Commission's findings was that Syrian preference with regard to mandates was overwhelmingly in favour of the United States or Great Britain rather than France. On the subject however of O.E.T.A. West, Clemenceau, as was to be expected, insisted upon the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement being implemented, although he was later persuaded by Lloyd George to allow Mosul to become an integral part of Iraq.

Meanwhile Faisal returned to Damascus to find a General Syrian Congress in turbulent session, with little interest in or sympathy with any of these negotiations. The city of Damascus was by then 'harbouring a great number of political leaders, army officers and students from Palestine and Iraq, as well as from all parts of Syria',⁵⁵ Faisal now found himself in the role of go-between, with this group of impatient Arab nationalists on one side and an unsympathetic and largely materialist party of French politicians on the other. At a meeting of the Supreme Council in September he conceded to the French their right to the temporary occupation of the Lebanon, but insisted that O.E.T.A. East should be constituted an Arab state with an Arab government in Damascus. But when he again returned to that city he found that the Syrian Congress had taken the matter into their own hands and proclaimed the whole of Syria a sovereign state with himself as King. Britain and France of course refused to recognize the validity of these proceedings, and in the next meeting of the Supreme Council, which took place at San Remo in April 1920, a final decision was taken as to the assignation of temporary mandates for the tutelage of the future independent Arab states. Syria and Lebanon were to go to France, Palestine and Iraq to Britain. On the publication of this decision, Franco-Arab relations in Syria naturally became impossibly strained, and remained so until the end of July, when the French, with a regrettable show of temper, ejected Faisal's Government from Damascus by military force. Faisal himself was invited by the British Government to come to London, where it soon proved that 'his belief in the friendly sentiments of the British towards him was no delusion',⁵⁵

In the preceding pages I have omitted any reference to the special controversy in regard to Palestine, neither mentioning the famous Balfour Declaration in which Britain committed herself to sponsoring a National Home for the Jews, nor the correspondence on the subject between Faisal and the Zionist leader, Dr Weizmann. Space would not permit here to follow the interminable negotiations recollected in such detail in many well-documented accounts published in recent years. But before finally returning to the story of Iraq, it is perhaps worth venturing a single observation, namely a regret that in the Sharif Hussain's momentous agreement with McMahon, Palestine was not more specifically included in the reservation which excluded certain districts from the general pledge. In the words of a great modern orientalist:³⁴ 'Palestine is Holy land to Jewry, to Islam and to Christendom, and as such it has claims to consideration which transcend both those of Arab nationalism and Jewish nationalism, though the special interest of each cannot be overlooked. Its meagre size is such that it represents but a fractional part of the Arab territory freed by British armies; its scanty capacity for population is such that it could only support a small fraction of the Jews of the world. That this little shrine of three world religions should be sacrificed to any one exclusive nationalism, . . . is probably distasteful to the most liberal and enlightened thought of today.'

The unrest occasioned by the failure of the Syrian Arabs to reach an understanding with the French had already communicated itself to Iraq, when the San Remo decisions were announced. An impatient desire for a degree of independent self-government, for which no one in their senses could have pretended that the country was yet equipped, now produced an agitation against the mandate principle in general. This was, 'furthered and encouraged by Iraqi leaders in Damascus, and more particularly, by the Iraqi branch of Al-Ahd'.⁵⁵ In Baghdad, the acting Civil Commissioner, Colonel A. T. Wilson, was one who considered that impatience for *self-government* should, in the interest of the country, be temporarily subordinated to the necessity for *good government*, and he, therefore, showed little sympathy towards those who opposed the mandate on nationalist grounds. A British proposal for a general Elective Assembly to draw up an organic law for

Iraq was not in time to prevent the armed rising which began in July 1920.

The story of the rebellion, which lasted four months and involved a large part of southern Iraq, has been adequately told elsewhere. It is a 'distressing tale of warfare amongst friends, of which the horror is exceeded only by the folly which brought it about. . . . It lasted from July to October, at the end of which the toll of losses had risen to some 10,000 casualties. The number of Arabs killed is not known with any certainty; it may have been as high as 4,000. Over 400 British lives were lost apart from 1,800 other casualties. The cost to the British exchequer was over £40,000,000, which was more than three times the total amount of the subsidies paid by Great Britain—in gold, arms and supplies—for the furtherance of the Arab Revolt from beginning to end. The damage to property and to the sources of revenue in the country was immense.'⁵⁵* In October Sir Percy Cox arrived to resume office as Civil Commissioner, and by that time the back of the rebellion had been broken.

Sir Percy Cox did not take long in sizing up the situation. He realized at once that the British Government were now faced in Iraq with the alternatives of Arab Government or evacuation, and, having himself already heard the beginnings of an outcry in England for an end to the unprofitable expenditure of lives and money in Iraq, he saw that, unless the first alternative could be speedily materialized, the second might be forced upon him. In addition to Miss Gertrude Bell, who had been appointed Oriental Secretary, his advisers now included Sir Edgar Bonham Carter and Mr H. St J. B. Philby, and with their help he now drew up a proposal for a new form of Provisional Government, a Council of Arab Ministers, supervised by British Advisers, and under the ultimate control of the High Commissioner. The aged Sayid Abdur Rahman Al-Gailani, Naqib-al-Ashraf of Baghdad, rather to everyone's surprise, agreed to head the Council of State as president, and this gave an important lead to other Iraqi notables to support the proposal. Several Iraqi leaders who had been in retirement during the previous regime now re-

* The rebellion started amongst the tribes of the lower Euphrates, who are congenitally rebellious. It is perhaps worth pointing out that they were in almost continuous rebellion against the Ottoman Government, and have since rebelled against the independent Arab State.

appeared and became candidates for ministerial posts. Among these was Nuri Pasha As-Said. Jafar Pasha Al-Askari became the first Minister of Defence. The new Provisional Government 'served as a bridge between the British authority and the disaffected population, and paved the way to a series of developments which, in course of time, were to lead to the abolition of the mandate and the grant to Iraq of its political independence'.

The necessity for a suitable ruler at the head of a Government constituted in this way had from the first been evident, and various possibilities were now canvassed. Some of the candidates put forward, with the perspective of time now seem a little surprising. Apart from the Naqib himself and Sayid Talib Pasha of Basrah, the first Minister of the Interior, the Shaikh of Mohammerah, Ibn Saud, the Aga Khan and even the Wali of Pusht-kuh were variously proposed. But it was to the sons of the Sharif Hussain that almost all signs eventually pointed.

It was largely on Mr Winston Churchill's initiative that a conference was at about this time called in Cairo, to re-examine and remedy the whole position in the Arab countries. Of this conference T. E. Lawrence afterwards wrote: 'Mr Winston Churchill was entrusted by our harassed cabinet with the settlement of the Middle East; and in a few weeks, at his conference in Cairo, he made straight all the tangle, finding solutions, fulfilling (I think) our promises in letter and spirit (where humanly possible) without sacrificing any interest of our Empire or any interest of the people concerned. So we were quit of the wartime Eastern venture, with clean hands, but three years too late to earn the gratitude which peoples, if not states, can pay.'⁵⁶ In regard to Iraq, at least, this was a fair claim. One of the decisions reached at Cairo was as to the suitability of the Amir Faisal for the Iraqi throne. The proposal which Mr Churchill already had in mind was for the negotiation of a treaty similar to that between Great Britain and Egypt, so as to establish Faisal as king of an independent state in alliance with Great Britain.

On 17 December 1920, Colonel (now Sir) Kinahan Cornwallis, who was later to become Faisal's secretary, was deputed to call upon him in London and request him to become a candidate for the throne of Iraq. The following summer

Faisal proceeded to Iraq in this capacity. 'The ground had been prepared by his British friends and his numerous Arab partisans, and although there were many dissentient voices his candidature obtained an enormous majority of the suffrage.' On 23 August 1921 he was proclaimed King of Iraq.⁵⁵

King Faisal's reign of twelve years was long enough to see Iraq through all the awkward stages of constitutional evolution. 'The debt which the country owes to its first king can scarcely be overstated. His gifts and his experience fitted him to play a determining part in the handling of some of its most difficult problems, and it is the unanimous verdict of all those who are in a position to judge that his influence was the decisive factor in the creation of the modern state of Iraq.'⁵⁵

The four successive treaties which marked the four stages in Iraq's emancipation were concluded respectively in October 1922, January 1926, December 1927 and June 1930.* The last of the four was the most decisive, since it led to Great Britain sponsoring the admission of Iraq as a sovereign independent state to the League of Nations in 1932, and accepting an alliance between herself and Iraq for a period of twenty-five years. In case of war the two countries were to consider themselves as allies. This treaty came automatically into force when, on 3 October 1932, Iraq was formally admitted to membership of the League by unanimous vote of fifty-two nations. The mandate was ended.

There is no point in belittling the good auspices under which the life of the new independent state began. Its northern frontiers had been fixed so as to include the whole *vilayet* of Mosul, by the treaty of January 1926, and confirmed by a tripartite agreement with Turkey in June of the same year. To the east, the old pre-war frontier with Iran still largely held good; while in the south, relations with Saudi Arabia were well on the way to a settlement. This finally came in 1936 when, mainly through the good offices of the British Government, a treaty of friendship was concluded at a personal meeting between King Ghazi and Ibn Saud. It should be added that payments to Iraq by the oil companies in 1932 were already nearly a million pounds, and have since reached nearly a quarter of the whole national revenue.

* See footnote on p. 207.

In a work in which he ably presents the story and spirit of the 'Arab Awakening', an Arab nationalist writer, the late George Antonius,⁵⁵ comments on the significance of this occasion. I quote his appraisal of Great Britain's accomplishment in Iraq, in order to avoid the charge of partisan judgement. He says: 'So far as the machinery of democratic government went, Iraq entered the League as a going concern; and the credit for that belongs in great measure to England.

'The British contribution to the building up of Iraq is one of the most remarkable instances of post-war reconstruction. Just as hard things may legitimately be said of the British Government's piratical attempt to grab Iraq after the war, so it can without exaggeration be said that the modern state of Iraq owes its existence largely to the efforts and devotion of its British officials. There were two reasons for this. One was that the British Government, as they discovered that the country was more a hornets' nest than an imperial garden of Eden, became increasingly anxious to ensure that the regime of Arab independence which had sooner or later to come, should possess real stability. The other was that, by a lucky accident of circumstance, Iraq was fortunate in getting the services of an unusually capable and conscientious band of British officials. Those two factors in combination helped to set up the Arab administration more rapidly and more securely on its feet. The achievement is all the more striking as Iraq, with its large tribal population, its sectarian divisions and the scarcity of its means of communication in proportion to its size, is a particularly difficult country to administer on the usual lines of bureaucratic routine. . . .

'It was fortunate for Iraq that, in many important respects, Great Britain's interests marched with her own, and that this community of interests embraced foreign as well as domestic questions. . . . The British desire to control the sources of oil in the *vilayet* of Mosul resulted not only in the incorporation, thanks entirely to British diplomacy, of that province in the Arab state, but also in effective Anglo-Iraqi co-operation towards the solution of the Kurdish problem. Similarly Great Britain's interest in the preservation of peace on the Iraq border caused her to take the initiative in bringing about, first, a personal reconciliation between King Faisal and King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud and, later, the establishment of friendly

relations between the Governments of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In almost every department of the foreign service, the Arab Government had the benefit of sympathetic British guidance ; and the British officials, taking their cue from their own Government, gave invaluable help in the laying of good foundations . . . and the progress achieved in Iraq between 1921 and 1932, for all its imperfections, is a credit to both countries and an example of what Anglo-Arab co-operation can do when it rests on the right foundations.'

As a complementary reflection, I may add some words written by Mr P. W. Ireland, four years after the end of the mandate.⁵⁷ In his opinion : ' Within the country still lie the problems of the creation of a social class of citizens, now beginning to appear, capable and willing to assume political duties from a sense of public duty and not of personal aggrandizement, the evolution of a free Press motivated by public spirit rather than by individual or party grievances, the assurance of free elections, and the elimination of sectarian and sectional animosities which will eradicate the antipathies between tribesmen and townsmen. But if the new regime can provide stability with a much needed discipline, if it will be motivated by foresighted and courageous statesmanship, and if the people of Iraq can and will devote themselves to the tasks which lie before them with the same energy which they expended in achieving independence, the position of Iraq among the progressive states may yet be assured.'

Ten years have passed since Iraq became an independent state. They have seen the short reign of Faisal's son Ghazi end tragically in a motor accident in the spring of 1939, and the accession of his little grandson Faisal as the second king of that name. Finally a second World War has found Iraq standing side-by-side with Great Britain, to face its hazards and hardships. And so the long story of the land of Twin Rivers reaches the present—a present most closely bound up with its illustrious past. The banks of the Tigris and Euphrates ' still echo with ghostly alarums ; the Mesopotamian deserts are full of the rumour of phantom armies '. As Gertrude Bell once admitted, it is not always easy to distinguish between the shadow and the reality.

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